

LITERATURE OF THE HOLOCAUST PERPETRATOR.
A COMPARATIVE LITERARY ANALYSIS OF
JONATHAN LITTELL'S "THE KINDLY ONES" WITH
GERMAN VÄTERLITERATUR (FATHER LITERATURE).

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Abstract

Undoubtedly the historical settings and aspects of the Nazi Holocaust have been examined for many decades. Research has focused much on the victims of the Holocaust. However, the examination of the perpetrators of the Nazi Holocaust continues to cause anxiety and controversy.

In my thesis I examine what possible constraints are imposed on authors/narrators and also readers by the sensitive and explosive subject of the representation of Holocaust perpetrators. I compare four texts of German Väterliteratur with Jonathan Littell's "The Kindly Ones" to examine the questions of aesthetics and ethics in the literary representation of Holocaust perpetrators, and if we can deduce their motives and motivations from these representations. The examination of these Holocaust perpetrator representations is an important contribution to our understanding of the past as well as a contribution to the formation of public cultural memory and identity.

All of the examined narratives form part of a continuously growing body of literary expressions of the Holocaust perpetrator and highlight a distinct obligation to the history they narrate – be it fictional or real.

My research includes a comparative literary analysis of authentic narratives featuring fictional perpetrators in order to find meaning in these representations that enable the reader to form not only a connection with a dark part of the German past but also with post-war and post-unification debates on the representation of the Holocaust. It also demonstrates a recognition that Holocaust perpetrators are as multifaceted and multidimensional as the narratives they occupy.

My thesis is not an exhaustive compilation but rather forms a small sample discussion that enables the reader to emphasise the Holocaust perpetrator. The narratives representing Holocaust perpetrators in contemporary literature serve to transmit history into the future as part of public and personal memory discourse, and the remembrance of history.

“...what is past is not dead; it is not even past.”

Christa Wolf in “*Kindheitsmuster*”

“...there is not a single aspect of German life and letters that remains unaffected by
Auschwitz.”

Demetz in “*After the fires. Recent writings in Germanies, Austria and Switzerland*”

Aims of thesis

Public discourse in Germany over the last few decades has been dominated by discussions regarding the memory of the Holocaust. As the American writer and Holocaust scholar Terrence Des Pres remarks: “...the image of the Holocaust is with us – a memory which haunts, a sounding board for all subsequent evil – in the back of the mind...for all of us now living, we, the inheritors.” (in de Pres) The discussions which include questions of memorialisation and representation of the Holocaust are reflected in all fields of society, and in particular the arts, film and literature. But in the immediate post-war decades these discussions were mainly victim-centred with literary contributions of memory literature by survivors such as Amery, Levi or Delbo. (in Grigson) Historian Saul Friedländer examined Nazi perpetrators in his work, “Nazi Germany and the Jews. The years of persecution, 1933-1939” in which he announced his intention to establish a “historical account of the Holocaust in which the policies of the perpetrators, the attitudes of surrounding society and the world of the victims could be addressed within an integrated framework”. Such a framework had been

missing from most historical accounts up until then, and Friedländer succeeded in combining the processes of decision-making and their implementation with the experiences of victims. Though he examined perpetrators, he ultimately gave a voice to the Jewish victims of the Third Reich. Other historians had also examined perpetrators such as Browning (“Ordinary Men” Browning) and Goldhagen (in Goldhagen), and there were fierce debates in the public memory arena about the memorialisation of the Holocaust, for instance between Bubis, Chairman of the Central Council of Jews in Germany, and German writer Walser. Friedländer published another volume in 2007, a text in which he skilfully interweaves individual testimony with the wider depiction of war and Holocaust. During recent years there has been a noticeable increase in reflections on issues of conceptualisation and depiction of Holocaust perpetrators after an initial reluctance for fear of obscuring or de-empathising survivor perspectives, and we have seen these examinations not only in historical fields but areas such as psychology and sociology, and the artistic areas of film and literature.

My thesis examines the topic of Nazi perpetrators, the entanglements and implications they caused for the Nachgeborenen, and how this is reflected in texts of Väterliteratur compared to Littell's "The Kindly Ones".¹

"Väterliteratur" is a German literary genre of mostly autobiographical texts starting in the 1970s concerned with the examination of the fathers' involvement in the Nazi regime and the moral implications that involvement had on their sons and daughters. Väterliteratur is often seen as a phenomenon of the 1970s but texts of Väterliteratur are still being published today.

I suggest for my thesis the term "perpetrator literature" to reflect the subject matter of the representation of perpetrator profiles, and therefore the term includes the texts from the Väterliteratur genre in Germany and Austria, as well as Littell's novel "The Kindly Ones". (Eaglestone 123-134)

For my analysis I use only authors whose literary works deal with the Nazi past of their father/grandfather, and the fictional figure in Littell's novel. I chose one fictional and three auto-biographical Väterliteratur texts. One of the authors is Austrian, the others are German. Three of the perpetrators of the Väterliteratur texts are fathers, the other is a grandfather which I chose to show the continuum of this literary genre to the present time. The four texts of Väterliteratur span in time from 1987-2004, and Littell's novel was first published in 2006. I made these selections as I felt the texts to be representative of a range of texts that deal with the fathers/grandfather of authors who had developed strategies for exploring their

¹ In my thesis the English title "The Kindly Ones" will be used. The novel was originally published in French in 2006 as "Les Bienveillantes" and in 2008 in Germany as "Die Wohlgesinnten". The English version was published in 2009. I have read the novel in both English and German, and as the author is American, I will quote from the English language version.

fathers'/grandfather's past; two of the older texts from the beginning of the *Väterliteratur* genre, and two more recent examples showing the expansion into more complex relationships such as family novels from the perspective of a third generation author that deals with an unknown grandfather. The literary search for one's own identity was central to the *Väterliteratur* in Germany and Austria, and the texts of *Väterliteratur* were chosen as examples of genealogical narrative, in which the authors or narrators try and find their place in their respective family narratives and the wider German/Austrian public narratives.

In my thesis I am using the four memory texts from the lands of the perpetrators to compare with Littell's "The Kindly Ones". The novel by Littell created an enormous response as his text offered a new perspective on perpetrator literature which will be discussed in depth. He produced a text in which a former Nazi SS-officer tells the reader "how it happened", much in contrast to Lanzmann's notion that perpetrators do not speak. (in FAZ) Littell's text can be compared to the *Väterliteratur* texts with regards to the perpetrator profile and aspects of memory, representation and the merit of literature while illuminating perpetrator motives and motivations. The publication of the novel crossed a line with regards to long established taboos of Holocaust perpetrator representation, and I am interested to examine how the novel is posited in the current memory discourse.

In the first part of my thesis I will give historical contexts on the second generation in post-war Germany. In the next part I will give a summary of the genre of *Väterliteratur*, and I am especially interested in the genre development and the significance of this genre in terms of concepts of memory literature and memory discourse. My main focus of attention is the comparison of perpetrators in the texts of *Väterliteratur* and Littell's, and also ethical implications the works of perpetrator literature produce for the reader.

I will discuss the four texts of Väterliteratur individually by providing for each the author's background and the perpetrator's background, a discussion on genre classification, content and style, similarities and differences, and the perpetrator profile.

Coming back to my choice of Littell's novel, I find it interesting what Littell stated in an interview with Pierre Nora that he wondered if his text was working in terms of literature bringing forth truth ("Marginalien" Littell 32), and from that premise the novel seems an excellent example in contrast to Väterliteratur in terms of the changing of foci from individual and subjective to collective and public discourses, as well as examining to what extent issues surrounding representation of perpetrators might have changed. In addition, I will compare the texts of perpetrator literature with regards to the value and importance of employing fiction in reflections about perpetrators versus autobiographical narratives, and the outcomes imparted. Accounts of perpetrators themselves have to raise doubt concerning the dangers of confusing or de-empathising survivors' accounts, and concern of empathising with perpetrator figures instead of objective and critical investigations. Both types of literature examined here are part of the continuously changing discourse of memory and questions how that memory is best transmitted.

1 Overview and concepts of perpetrator literature (by historians and fictional) and Väterliteratur

Historical background The Nazi Holocaust is one of the best evidenced genocides, and it is this evidence that gives us enormous insight with regards to its perpetrators. Holocaust

studies and Holocaust literature have long focussed on these perpetrators and their crimes. They become real to us from countless sources the Nazis themselves left behind, and other sources such as witness statements, private documentation and perpetrators' testimonies. Historians such as Hilberg (in Hilberg) and Browning used these documents extensively in trying to find answers about Nazi perpetrators. There seem to be many views on the motivations and motives of perpetrators, and the debates are still on-going. It seems that we have moved on from the images of the huge machine that facilitated the Holocaust with Nazis as automatons. But the Nazi extermination process was not just an additional task on top of German bureaucracy such as Hilberg saw it. (in Hilberg) It was completed by human beings. Over the last decades, portraits of perpetrators seemed to favour a homogenic type of perpetrator – either demonised, pathologised, criminalised, even banal. But the reality is that it is much more complicated than that. Most perpetrators do not fit a stereotypical profile of being a monster or insane such as Barbie, or ordinary and banal such as Eichmann. We also know that Germany was not alone with its racial sentiments and race-purifying policies.

In pursuit of their ferocious ideology, Germany produced different kinds of perpetrators, and amassed of them across many levels, institutions, and countries. In the first instance the hard core, radical and racial anti-Semite “monsters” spring to mind. Names such as Mengele and Barbie are as notorious as Hitler and Himmler themselves, and will be forever etched into the German collective psyche and memory. Oversimplified theories such as perhaps Daniel Goldhagens' who assumed most Germans were anti-Semite, will not help us determine the motives and motivations of Holocaust perpetrators. (in Goldhagen) When looking at perpetrator motives, witness and survivor evidence seems to be of limited use while perpetrator testimony raised serious issues in terms of bias and the attempts to exonerate

themselves. Geoffrey Hartmann examined the therapeutic value of using literature to confront the emotional trauma after the Holocaust. (in Hartmann)

In my thesis I am concentrating on Nazi perpetrators, real and fictional. Even in that area the concept of perpetrator is complicated. Were all the perpetrators of the Holocaust ideological fanatics? Brainwashed? We all have heard the terms “hard-core Nazi”, “follower”, “bystander”, “Schreibtischtäter”, “Papiersoldat”, “Mitwisser”, “Geheimnisträger” – are all these “perpetrators”? An even greyer area are those who knew but did nothing.

It is remarkable that Littell’s literary perspective appeared not in German but instead was published in French by an American writer. The text caused scandal as suddenly there was a Nazi – albeit fictional – in the centre of a novel about the Holocaust and not a victim. Post-war there had been mainly texts from victims of the Holocaust. This kind of literature is called “Holocaust literature” and concerns itself in the broadest term with the question: “What is the nature of the author’s literary response to the Holocaust?” and it is also proposed: “Holocaust literature comprises all forms of writing, both documentary and discursive, and in any language, that shaped the public memory of the Holocaust and has been shaped by it.” (in Patterson Berger Cargas) The Arbeitsstelle Holocaustliteratur at Justus-Liebig-University in Giessen, Germany defines Holocaust literature as “eine Gattung der Literatur und umfasst eine Vielfalt von Textsorten, die die klassischen Gattungsgrenzen zwischen Epik, Lyrik und Drama ueberschreitet. Gemeinsam ist allen der thematische und inhaltliche Bezug zum Holocaust.” Holocaust literature spans experiences first hand such as diaries or journals which were produced during the war, or authors who write about it without first hand experiences. It includes Väterliteratur as a sub category. The above definition

characterises Holocaust literature to exclude historical or scientific documents or essays.

Authors in this genre are Anne Frank, William Styron, Art Spiegelman, Paul Celan, Primo Levi, Jean Amery, Charlotte Delbo, Elie Wiesel and many more authors, some well-known and some not so well-known authors. The authors are often Jewish, many of them survivors. Many of the works of Holocaust literature fall into other genres such as family or historical novels, and converge with more than one other genre.

The Väterliteratur genre Texts in the genre of memory literature concern communicative and cultural memory as an important contribution in “Vergangenheitsbewältigung”. They are concerned with the trauma of both victims and perpetrators, has influenced cultural and social debates in Germany and Austria, and today are part of their collective memory. There is continued interest in scholarly discussions about the Holocaust as publications by critics such as Franklin (in Franklin) or a collection of essays published by Adams/Vice (in Adams Vice) show.

Since the 1970's there has been a boom in texts about perpetrators. “Väterliteratur” was the term for these texts that began as a debate between the post-war generations with their parents and grandparents, mainly about their stance in WWII and the Holocaust. This mainly critical and often accusing debate, revealed a generational conflict in the late 1960s and 1970s as the children of Nazi perpetrators inherited their families' legacies and had to come to terms with them. Many of these children had to deconstruct the rather sanitised versions of their relatives and face a – sometimes agonising - truth behind those versions. This is the reason why there is a difference in the depth and to which degree some of the children and grandchildren of perpetrators work through their inherited biographies which Welzer

describes as a “schwer überbrückbare Kluft zwischen Wissen und Zuneigung oder Urteilkraft und Gefühl”. (“*Schön Unscharf*” Welzer 62) The spectrum of emotions and opinions was as varied as the individual family sagas, from defiance to complete condemnation. Authors often found themselves caught in a dualism between hatred and love, understanding or rejection, especially those who had known their fathers as loving parents and suddenly were confronted with them as Nazi perpetrators.

Väterliteratur was embedded in what is called “Neue Subjektivität”, a term devised by Marcel Reich-Ranicki.¹ It denotes a trend of literature deeply subjective and auto-biographical in nature which started in the 1970s. The authors and narrators of Väterliteratur search for their own identities as they reflected on such issues as the entanglement of their family in the country’s history, the society they lived in and also personal issues such as problems, dreams and fantasies. This kind of literature is aimed at self-expression and the search for one’s identity through those narratives. It includes elements of confessional and therapeutic writing in terms of overcoming crisis and mourning. The term “Neue Subjektivität” denotes the medium of communication between author and reader, a medium where the exchange of ideas, emotions, experiences and thoughts was encouraged and desired. The “Neue Subjektivität wollte vielmehr zugleich mit dem Privaten dessen ueberindividuell Bedeutsames erzählen”, and we can also see it as “[...] die Öffnung der Individualgeschichte zur Sozialgeschichte”. (Mauelshagen 89) This has to be seen in stark contrast to the more politicised literature of the late 1960s. Authors use – amongst many public materials – private materials such as photos, diaries, films, real names and real dates. Autobiography and authenticity are very important characteristics of Väterliteratur, and some of the authors see it as constitutive for this genre. As war and Holocaust retreat further into the past every day, along with the loss of witnesses, we also find more hybrid forms. Many

of the works of this genre are not classified as “auto-biographies” or “biographies” but as “novel” or “novella” or “Erzählung”. Martin Pollack called his text a “report”.

Second generation authors developed with their writing an accusing instrument in order to challenge established societal and familial structures hoping to stop societies’ inclination to forget. (Vogt 179) In the private arena the German past was dealt with differently to the public arena. Aleida Assmann makes this distinction between “Erinnerung” and “Gedächtnis” – one is individual and subjective while the other is collective and public. (in Assman) Harald Welzer says that “Während die kollektive Erinnerung den Holocaust und die nationalsozialistischen Verbrechen ins Zentrum stellt, kreist die private Erinnerung der Familien um das Leiden der Angehörigen im Krieg, um mühseliges Überleben in schlechten Zeiten und um die persönliche Integrität in düsterer Zeit.” („Schön unscharf“ Welzer 53) For Welzer the texts of Väterliteratur show clearly “[...] , dass ein innerfamiliales Erinnerungsvermögen prinzipiell die unscharfen Bilder der Rollen und Handlungen von Familienangehörigen in Zeiten des Tötens vorzieht. Es sind die konturlosen, vagen, eben unscharfen Bilder, die in Gestalt widersprüchlicher, nebulöser, fragmentierter Geschichten im Familiengedächtnis niedergelegt sind.” (56) Many authors of Väterliteratur did mention that the families had not told them much about the father, that there was a taboo of speaking about what the father had done. This produced contradictory, nebulous and fragmented stories’ in the family memory created by denial and secrecy, often out of shame, and sometimes due to a simple denial to examine the father’s actions as it was easier to believe he was “only a Schreibtischhengst” or “never got his own fingers dirty”. Many German perpetrators were in the category Welzer describes as people who thought of themselves as moral and good, but in a very short time turned into discriminative and even murderous people. (in “Täter” Welzer) We know that many Germans did not only know

about Hitler's policies but supported them through agreement, denunciation and cooperation. For Welzer there is no differentiation in terms of perpetration – he feels the terms followers, bystanders and hard core perpetrators do not accurately describe the reality of human beings who “gemeinsam, jeder auf seine Weise, der eine intensiver und engagierter, der andere skeptischer und gleichgültiger, eine gemeinsam soziale Wirklichkeit herstellen.”

While Väterliteratur seems a phenomenon especially of the 1970s and early 1980s, it continues into the next decade with a further “Aufgeben der affektiven und intellektuellen Distanz zum ‘Objekt’ Faschismus”. (Emmerich 166) Ralf Schnell saw Väterliteratur as a “Literatur im Uebergang zu den 80er Jahren (1978-1986)”. (Schnell 321) Texts of the genre of Väterliteratur continued to be published over the next decades with texts such as Peter Henisch's “Die kleine Figur meines Vaters” (Austria, 1975), “Mitteilung an den Adel” by Elisabeth Plessen (1976), “Der alltaegliche Tod meines Vaters” by Paul Kersten (1978), “Ein anderes Leben. Versuch sich einem Unbekannten anzunaehern” by Werner Bucher (1981), “Ordnung ist das ganze Leben. Roman meines Vaters” bei Ludwig Harig (1986), and in 1987 Peter Schneider's “Vati”. Welzer sees a shift in the discourse of guilt which at this stage included also Germans as victims, and family sagas were often communicated as such in the family memories. For Welzer the shift had occurred in terms of the “Bekenntnishafte zum Thema Auschwitz” with Guenter Grass' “Im Krebsgang” (2002) developing a “Ursprungsereignis der Nachkriegsgesellschaft, das nicht im Tun, sondern jetzt im Erleiden liegt – womit sich ein Paradigmenwechsel in der Erinnerungskultur der Bundesrepublik ankuendigt, die bis dato eben durch das Gebot >>Nie wieder Auschwitz<< definiert war.” (Welzer 54) This trend increased in the Väterliteratur during the 1980s and 1990s. The publications do not tend to be different in content or style to the earlier Väterliteratur but tend to include family members other than fathers. According to Welzer it was Bernhard

Schlink's "Der Vorleser" in 1995 which gave the literary impulse to examine a "Schuldthematik (gelang), die ihrerseits ein tradiertes Narrativ aufnahm und in einen intergenerationellen Zusammenhang stellte. Dieses Narrative besteht in der Rekonstruktion des schuldlos Schuldigwerdens, [...]" and marks a "[...] signifikanten Bruch mit der bis dato ueblichen anklagenden Haltung gegenueber der Taetergeneration [...]." (Schnell 55)

Bernhard Schlink's "The reader" told of loving a perpetrator. We can attribute this shift to the trend in the normalisation of the past in which the "schuldlos Schuldig-werden" was a major theme. The texts of Väterliteratur seem more concerned with a confrontation or reckoning, whereas the texts of the 1990's and later, which are often called generational novels or family novels ⁱⁱ – seem attempts to understand or reconcile the family history.

More recent Väterliteratur is that of the "third generation", the grandchildren of Nazi perpetrators. Welzer examines third generation authors such as Tania Dückers and Christoph Amend, but finds it impossible to judge one text to be representative of a whole generation. He comments that "In summa repräsentiert Dücker's Roman einer Enkelin ueber eine Enkelin die vom milden Einverständnis, wie es Schlink und Hahn favorisieren, abweichende Version einer Annäherung an die Tätergeneration – ein erstaunlicher Befund, gemessen an den generationellen Selbstbildern der 68er und der Generation ihrer Kinder." („Opa war kein Nazi“ Welzer 63) Welzer sees that this third generation doesn't have "rechthaberische Selbstgewissheit und ausgeprägte Neigung zu entschiedenem Urteilen" such as the second generation had.

Väterliteratur continued to be published in the last few decades.² While some of tone of the current Väterliteratur is somewhat less accusatory, others were not as forgiving such as Niklas Frank or and Uwe Timm. These texts are not theoretical discussions with the theme of the family members' part and perpetration of the war and Holocaust, but essentially personal and subjective investigations into how the family member's involvement becomes one's own entanglement, and how an event so long ago can still have ramifications for one's own life decades after. The narratives openly look at and reconstruct the past, sometimes if not to forgive but to understand and form a wish to free themselves from the sins of the forefathers in order to live despite the entanglement. They do not constitute "eine Befleckung des kollektiven Selbstbildes" (in Assman) but perhaps new perspectives on what should be "morally appropriate action of the Nachgeborenen." As such they are also journeys of self-discovery, into the heart of humanity and civil courage.

The examination of the past raises ethical questions about the present and future, and our responsibility on how to represent and incorporate that past. Väterliteratur therefore has an ethical aspect that connects to the socio-political realities of today. Perhaps Aleida Assmann's approach to Holocaust memory could be adopted: "what is needed is a constellation of different self-critical national memories reflecting the multi-perspectival quality of the Holocaust as an exemplary example of entangled history." (Assman)

² With works such as Doerte von Westernhagen's "Die Kinder der Taeter" (1987), Kerstin Hensel's "Tanz am Kanal" (1994), Juergen Herbst's "Requiem for a German Past" (1999), Ulla Hahn's "Unscharfe Bilder" (2003), Tania Duecker's "Himmelskoerper" (2003) und Volker Altwasser's "Wie ich vom Ausschneiden loskam" (2003).

The interesting thing about Väterliteratur is that it is able to provoke in the readers different reactions: some see insult in its inclination or willingness to understand or rehabilitate or reconcile, while others praise Väterliteratur especially for that. Undeniably, the texts provide an immense contribution to public discourse. We will discover a striking difference between the emotional and sometimes even understanding perspective of the German Väterliteratur texts compared with the literary plot of Littell's novel, and the critical reception of Littell's text suggests the author touched a chord or even a nerve with many critics and readers. One could say Littell began a new phase of Holocaust literature with his novel as there has been a shift in perspective from victim to perpetrator, and therefore from documentary and autobiographical literature to literalised narratives. This shift, or expansion of what could be called the genre of perpetrator literature, happened over decades as discussed in my overview. Littell's novel also fits into the category of a new phase of Holocaust literature in that the newer authors are not themselves witnesses of the Holocaust.

I acknowledge the contribution of the existing body of critical comment on Littell's text, however I would like to compare his novel with the four texts of Väterliteratur and provide an analysis and comparison, tracing divergences and finding similarities between the texts. I propose to examine the texts with regards to the following key features: what are the anxieties which surround the representation of Holocaust perpetrators, the taboos surrounding a perpetrator perspective, the ethical implications of the reader in terms of consumption of perpetrator literature, and the distance to the perpetrator, the provocation of the reader. I will also examine whether Littell's text in its more radical form of perpetrator literature will be able to find a "reassuring closure" (Bernstein 226-227) through literature.

2 Individual texts

2.1. Peter Schneider, “Vati”, 1987

2.1.1. Author background

Peter Schneider was born on 21 April 1940 in Lübeck, Germany, the third child of six.

Schneider studied German, History and Philosophy in Freiburg, Munich and Berlin from 1959-1964. From 1966-1972 he was actively involved in the German and Italian student movements. Schneider is a well-known novelist and one of Germany’s foremost cultural and social critics.

Schneider became well-known for works such as film scripts and short stories as well as novels and essays. He has professorships in Princeton, Dartmouth, Harvard and Stanford.

Peter Schneider lives in Berlin, and since 2010 in New York City. Schneider is also the Roth Distinguished Writer-in-residence at Georgetown University.

2.1.2. Perpetrator background

Josef Rudolf Mengele was born in 1911 and died in 1979 while swimming in his South American hideout. He was one of the best known high ranking Nazis due to his cruel and inhumane experiments on Auschwitz inmates, earning him the name “Angel of Death”.

Mengele had been an SS officer and a physician with doctorates in anthropology and medicine (both which were taken off him after WWII). Mengele always had an interest in genetics, working under Dr. von Verschür at the Institute for Hereditary Biology and Racial

Hygiene in Frankfurt from 1937. He was married to Irene Schönbein, and his son Rolf was born in March 1940. Irene divorced Mengele in 1949, and in 1956 Mengele married his brother's widow, Martha.

After being injured during battle in 1942, Mengele became unfit to fight as a soldier and he was posted to the Race and Resettlement Office in Berlin where he was promoted to SS-Hauptsturmführer and where he had a continued association with von Verschür. In 1943 Mengele arrived in Auschwitz as one of the camp physicians. Here he selected inmates for his experiments, especially twins. Mengele took an interest in dwarfism, attempted to change eye colour by injecting chemicals into the eyes of children, performed amputations and other surgeries many on women prisoners such as sterilisations and shock treatments. Mengele also tried to create conjoined twins by sewing children together. As a “doctor” Mengele was simply a butcher, performing operations without anaesthesia and removing organs unnecessarily. After the war Mengele fled to Argentina and later Brazil where he drowned in 1979. His son Rolf visited him in Brazil in 1977 where he found an unrepentant Nazi who claimed in 1960 he had never personally killed, injured or caused bodily harm to anyone. Dr. Nyiszli, one of the camp doctors in Birkenau attested in 1945 to have been witness to an instance where Mengele personally killed camp inmates. (Lifton) Mengele was buried under the name Wolfgang Gerhard. His body was found in Embu, Brazil in 1986 and in 1992 DNA-testing proved the buried remains to be those of Mengele. Mengele had never been held accountable for his role in the Third Reich's genocidal policies and his pseudo-scientific experiments on human beings. ⁱⁱⁱ

2.1.3. Content and style

“Vati” is a word for father like “Daddy” or “Papa” – a name for a father that one is close to and fond of.

Schneider’s “Vati” is the fictional story of the son of a wanted Nazi criminal. The narrator travels to Brazil to meet his father, a wanted Nazi that had been in hiding. While in Brazil the son and father cannot bridge the gap that exists between them. Although the son is torn between emotions of disgust, contempt and shame and the intention to find answers to the accusations against the father, he is not able to distance himself from this father and to outright condemn him due to the ambivalent emotions that stem from wanting to be close to a father that was, in fact, one of the most evil mass murderers of the Nazi regime. Though the relationship between the two seems doomed because they have never really known each other, and that his father is in fact the “Angel of death”, the son still hopes to find a “Vati”.

The text was written as a long letter by the protagonist to an old friend (I-Perspective narrator). Even though no names are mentioned in the text, the time of publication and textual references in the narrative indicate that the text is about the story of Rolf and his infamous father Josef Mengele. Rolf Mengele had come out in a series in the German magazine “Bunte” (Number 26-30) in 1985 revealing he had known about his fathers’ hiding place in Brazil for some years. After the father’s death, the son revealed he not only had knowledge of his hiding place, but had even visited his father in Brazil in 1977 before his death. “Vati” is the fictional account of these events. Peter Schneider had followed the series in the “Bunte”

and asked himself what he would have done had he found out his father “by sheer coincidence” (Schneider 8) had been no other than Josef Mengele.

The text caused a literary scandal in Germany. Gerda-Marie Schönfeld asked whether “Vati” was just a “schlichtes Illustrierten-Plagiat” (Schönfeld 216-219) as Schneider made no reference to the Bunte series from which he was accused of stealing sentences, sometimes “word for word”, and that his literary freedom was not grounded in authenticity. Schönfeld states that Schneider inserted banalities into the original story to fill gaps when it suited him and he had used the general south-American atmosphere” to complete his story.

2.1.4. The father perpetrator and the son

Essentially the son would like to conclude years of knowing about his father’s whereabouts when he travels to Brazil, and to bring to a close a certain complicity he felt knowing who and where this father was. The narrator seems to be on the defensive toward his friend as soon as he begins his account. He asks rhetorically why he should not have hugged his father when he met him just like “thousands of other sons would have done despite the father’s deeds.” (“Vati” Schneider 7) In this statement we see that the narrator is torn very much between the emotions of finally meeting his father and the knowledge of who this father was.

The narrator sensed in his childhood that there was something about him that was clear to others while not clear to him. (13) He says that the “Spruch von <<der Gnade der spaeten Geburt>> war damals noch nicht erfunden und stand mir nie zur Verfuegung; ich spuerte

lange bevor ich es wusste, dass ich schuldig geboren war.” (Schneider)³ When he learns what his father had done during the war, he is in denial. The narrator feels branded by the father’s past. The history of the Third Reich and the Hitler Regime is more than a generic political past – the father’s status as most wanted criminal in the world became the narrator’s present with all its implications and must have been traumatic for the narrator.

The father’s name is the only link the son has to the father apart from their shared genetics, and the son carries it like a stigma or a wound for all to see. The narrator asks himself what, if anything, he could have inherited from his father. (21) He does not elaborate what other traits or characteristics he might have inherited from his infamous father, perhaps because he is already overburdened by the simple inheritance of his name. However, he considers the possibility that he might inherit not just physical traits from his father.

As the son of a guilty Nazi and a lawyer, the narrator feels obliged to find out about his father’s crimes, and openly admits the difficult nature of the ambivalence he is feeling: he is caught in the space between advocating for his father’s victims and wanting to be a loving, loyal son. He also believes the father’s crimes were those of an entire nation. (22) This could be seen as the narrator releasing his father from individual guilt and considering the approach of “collective German guilt” in the crimes of the Nazis, however, the theory of collective guilt is a difficult stance and is often not politically or morally supported, and here can only be seen as an attempt to find an excuse for the father.

³ The “Gnade der späten Geburt” is a term that was used on 24 January 1984 by Helmut Kohl in a speech in Israel which gave expression to the fact that many Germans were too young during the war to have any reason to feel guilty for the sins of the Nazis, and that there was a certain kind of grace or mercy simply just because of their birthdates.

At this point, his own guilty feeling and his feeling of loathing and disgust turn into defiance. He considers attempts to understand his father, even defend him. (23) The failure to expel the perpetrator entangles the narrator and creates his guilty feelings, and his dilemma of being caught between filial duty, justice and morality.

The narrator disapproves of his friend - who is representative of the 1968's student movement – for criticising their parental generations while taking their monthly cheque at the same time. (27-28) He criticises the Nachkriegsgeneration for asserting they are nothing like their parents which in turn supposedly means they did not have to look at their own responsibility. This the narrator finds hypocritical. Opposition to the older generation who had been part of the authoritarian structures of Nazism grew in the 1960s, and the stance of family members during WWII and the perpetration of the Holocaust was put under the microscope. Stimulated by events such as the Eichmann trial of 1961, the Vietnam War, and frictions of the Cold War, Germany's younger generation grew more and more angered by the older generation's failure of political awareness as well as society's authoritarian structures and state repression. (21-22) The inquiry of the narrator into the father's culpability coincided with this trend.

The narrator's comments to the classmate highlight his view that essentially the student movement had turned on itself by using the exact strategies against the older generation that they had previously criticised them for. The narrator also accuses the political activists of the late 1960s of using their birthdates as they had been "born after the event" and as such felt they did not have to concern themselves with questions of guilt and culpability. (57) But he

asked himself if, by the attempt to disassociate themselves from their parents and the fascist and patriarchal roots, one does not create another avoidance of the questions and deny the past once again.

To the narrator everybody is capable of being a true perpetrator and murderer. This realisation fills the son with a feeling of “superiority”. (29) He even praises his father for never selling out on his beliefs as many of his “associates” had done. (29) Disowning this father is not an option for the narrator as it would constitute not looking at his own guilt.

The son says what he wanted from his father was that he appear before a German court to face the accusations for his crimes. Further, and this is an important revelation, the narrator wants to be redeemed by his father, or redeem himself and the world from him:” [...]. Ich wollte ihn zur Rede stellen, ihn dazu bewegen, sich vor einem deutschen Gericht zu verantworten” (30-31) and: “[...] Ich wollte ihn stellen, ihn mit dem Recht meines schuldlos schuldbeladenen Lebens zu Fall bringen. Nein, ich will es mit einfacheren, ebenso falschen Worten sagen: ich wollte durch ihn erloest werden – oder mich und die Welt von ihm erloesen.” (31) The term “erlösen”, translated in English means “redemption” and relates to Saul Friedländer’s highly persuasive interpretation of Nazi thought, that is, the theory of “redemptive anti-Semitism”. According to Friedländer, the Nazis anti-Semitism was distinctively “redemptive” and therefore allowed the Nazis to explain their hatred of the Jews accordingly, and the Nazis saw themselves as redeemers of the world with their murderous policies against the Jews. The term “redemptive” as used by the narrator in “Vati” echoes this religious notion, and the religious language of the Nazis. Friedländer saw the Holocaust as an event that was almost impossible to be described in normal language. With their

“redemptive anti-Semitism” the Nazi’s could explain everything in the world, and therefore the calculated extermination of European Jewry. (in Friedländer) The narrator feels that he lives a “schuldlos schuldbeladenes Leben” (31) because of who his father is, and as such considers his own guilt without ever having committed any crime. But he never asks the questions that might compromise the father, or make him face up to what he really did, especially as the father is still a fervent Nazi ideologist. And therefore I will say this silence perpetuates the conspiracy with the father. (Kronendorfer 2) In addition, the son is sure that he will not deliver his father to those hunting him. When the Bunte series about Rolf Mengele appeared in the 1990s, the revelation that Rolf had known about his father’s hiding place for years caused an international uproar. But it also caused other authors to speak out - Niklas Frank published his work “Mein Vater. Eine Abrechnung” soon after the publication of “Vati”.

The son compares his father to other retired pensioners who spend their day cleaning and shopping and even worrying who might find them when they fall off a ladder while changing light bulbs. (50) This could be seen as a trivialisation of his father’s status as one of the most wanted mass murderers of the time. Mengele is also described as a mundane, ordinary pensioner, someone who is fearful and paranoid, an aging loner who watches children’s cartoons and lives in a house no bigger than a dog kennel. However, the narrator also mentions that he is “large and powerful” with animal-like speed and awful strength (43), and he even envisages his father as someone who is capable of killing with a single blow. (43) Again, Schneider could be criticised for his description of the father as it diminishes the real Mengele’s barbarism and cruelty. But the narrator also considers Mengele’s other side which shows the ambivalence the narrator is feeling regarding the father. Lifton calls the two sides of Mengele’s “doubling”, a process by which Nazis such as Mengele or Eichmann can be

“banal” in the Arendtian sense but also capable of extreme evil on the other side. These two sides or two “part-selves” are both capable of adapting to different environments - such as being a loving family father at home while cutting up Jews in a concentration camp the next day. Each part-self behaves like a functioning whole. Mengele’s commitment to the Nazi cause was the link between the two part-selves. Other psychological traits contributed to the doubling process such as his sadism and “his inclinations toward omnipotence and total control over others”, as well as schizoid tendencies. (Lifton) The doubling process called forth his potential for evil, and Auschwitz provided the perfect place to reach his potential. Lifton called Mengele a “visionary ideologue, an efficiently murderous functionary, a diligent careerist – and disturbingly human.” (50)

The son speaks of his conscience as being overstimulated by the fact that his father is Josef Mengele. If we equate conscience with a judgement of intellect, or a moral stance or intuition, we know that the narrator is overburdened by his conscience, he is caught between knowing what is right and wrong. (50) He is a lawyer who he derives moral values from principles, rules and laws that are sacred to his profession, and as such feels compromised. Treated in the most general terms, a lawyer is supposed to deliver justice, and the narrator clearly does not as he does not report the father’s whereabouts. This puts the narrator in the position of self-doubt, distinct uneasiness and a mix of defiance, shame and the feeling he has to justify his actions not only to the classmate but to himself. The narrator knows that his entanglement in the father’s past has contaminated and tainted his life and his personal as well as professional life.

The perpetrator we meet in the text is still a zealous supporter of National Socialism. He has made no atonement for any of his crimes. This perpetrator cannot be classed insane or mentally ill – he has two doctorates and is a seemingly civilised and educated person – who had an opportunity to follow his scientific experiments. Mengele is an ideologist as well as a careerist and someone selected due to the basis of that ideology and his devotion to the Nazi cause. He was intent upon gaining personal recognition as a Nazi scientist that applied the results to German-centred racial objectives. Though he was committed to the Nazi ideology and most likely had a prior commitment to anti-Semitism, he seems a Nazi that was provided with conditions that enabled him to progress step by step to his position as camp doctor at Auschwitz. Here his experiments and murderous actions - necessary steps in order to extend the regime's values and belief system with its desire for purity and cleansing - as well as his personal ambitions were the perfect conditions for this Nazi to practice his "craft".

Christian Schultz-Gerstein argues that Schneider and other second and third generation authors do not "describe an exotic monster". (Schultz-Gerstein 225-230) They describe the "Durchschnittstyp einer Generation und einer Klasse, die sich dem Adel des Geistes und der kultivierten Manieren zurechnete und die Verbrechen, die sie schweigend deckte, ganz selbstverstaendlich fuer geboten und anstaengig hielt".

Adolf Höfer heavily criticised Schneider's "omission of the father's role" as a trivialisation of fascism. (Höfer 11-12)

Hannah's Arendt's concept of the "banality of evil" (in Arendt) became of importance following the publication of her 1963 report "Eichmann in Jerusalem. A report on the banality of evil". Her concept was that people who carry out unspeakable crimes such as Eichmann were not monsters or crazed fanatics but rather ordinary individuals who followed the orders they were given with the energy of good bureaucrats and in a systematic manner. Murder became routine and acceptable as part of the job, but more so to contest the prevalent depictions of the atrocities committed by the Nazis as having come from a will to do evil or a trait such as sadism. According to Arendt, Eichmann had a failure of the faculties of sound thinking and judgement, and exhibited no malevolent anti-Semitism nor offensive personality. She stated that his deeds were monstrous but he was quite ordinary. The absence of the ability to think resulted in an absence of judgement, and the failure of his thinking capabilities prevented Eichmann from self-reflection and the awareness of his evil deeds. To Arendt it was not ideological conviction, pathology or self-interest that made Eichmann a cruel and reprehensible mass murderer but incredible superficiality. Arendt deconstructed the image of a demonised perpetrator, and tried to convince that human beings could become like Eichmann under a totalitarian regime. However, Eichmann had no regrets nor any of the - in my opinion misattributed - Arendtian "banality" when he declared he would be leaping into his grave satisfied at the end of the war knowing he had killed five million Jews. Mengele's pseudo-scientific experiments can also only be described as abnormal, perverted and evil. Both Eichmann and Mengele were looking for affirmation in job and career, and in the hierarchy of the Nazis.

Some of Schneider's critics felt that the protagonist in "Vati" "perceives his relationship to his father's crimes as an inheritance of both biblical proportion and genetic character that is fundamental to his own identity" (McGlothlin 143), and comparing this stigma with the

“mark of Cain”. (Riordan 1-31) As such the comprehension may just be too much for the son who simply cannot deliver the father, as it is indeed an inheritance of biblical proportion and cannot be deemed a weakness in the narrator’s character.

Erin McGlothlin states that Peter Schneider’s *Vati* should not be called *Väterliteratur*: She feels Schneider’s text may be a story about a Nazi father, but according to her, “*Vati*” is definitely not *Väterliteratur*” (152) as she supports Michael Schneider’s opinion that “the parents’ silence about their role in the Holocaust and the absence of an intergenerational dialogue about the past are not something that can be righted by the sons’ literary efforts to excavate the fathers’ fascist background and to question their complicity in Nazi crimes.” (147) – essentially what his brother’s narrator did.

Mauelshagen feels that “*Vati*” is essentially Kitsch where the themes of *Väterliteratur* and the generational conflicts are only in part “assembled” or “processed according to fashion”, and the “actions of the father ruin the son”: “in *Vati* ist das Vaterthema nun tatsächlich zur leeren Hülle verkommen, wurden Themen der *Väterliteratur* und des Generationskonflikts nur noch versatzstückartig montiert, modisch aufbereitet...[...] völlig funktionslose Szenen – [...] wirklich zum Klischee geronnen [...] der Sohn durch die Handlungen des Vaters zugrunde gerichtet wird; [...]. (Mauelshagen 57-58)

Another criticism was that Schneider used a fictional character modelled on the series about Mengele in the “*Bunte*” magazine two years earlier and made no reference to it. (Schönfeld 216-219) The fictionalisation of real historical events and people is seen by some critics as

something that should never be done as literature and history are seen to be incompatible, even “mutually exclusive.” (McGlothlin 150) The fictionalisation of history can lead to the distortion of history, and the narrativisation of actual facts is often seen as ethically problematic, if not completely unacceptable. I would like to argue that fictionalisation can offer a new perspective and has to be seen as an important function of literature. With regards to fictionalisation, there have also been favourable comments about “Vati”. Peter Morgan asserts that “it is in the narrative situation of the report to the ex-friend, and in the thematisation of the act of writing, that “Vati” becomes literature of a wider relevance than the auto-biographical, and that Schneider becomes more than a plagiarist.” (Morgan 104-133) It was also mentioned that the members of the 1960s student movement had simply “dispensed with their family taboos about any family discussion of Nazism or the Holocaust by summarily “outing” their fathers to each other as Nazis”. (Jensen 84)

Brigitte Jensen writes in her thesis that “severing the emotional ties to their Nazi parents had left student intellectuals, like his friend, no other identity than of hypocrite or victim.”

(Jensen) Schneider conceived that many of his generation simply omitted to deal with the guilt of their fathers. Schneider’s protagonist tries to come to terms with the parents’ past while trying to understand it, instead of not looking at it at all or shifting the blame, or outright rejecting his father. It could be argued that the rejection of their parents only “perpetuated the guilty silence that those parents maintained about their past crimes.” (Jensen

4) Further Jensen feels that Schneider’s protagonist “tries to explain how he comes to see humanity in the Nazi “monster” as well as a demon in his “daddy”. Rather than “let the schism between emotional and intellectual reactions paralyse him, the son finally locates in himself the personal responsibility to bear that painful ambivalence instead of making it taboo as his peers had done.” (5) By rejecting their parents, Jensen asserts “the student

radicals thus both indicted and tacitly acquitted their parents while renouncing all personal obligation to work through the Nazi legacy that they had inherited, both historically and as individuals”. (Schneider 84) In contrast to the passive-aggressive stance struck by his fellow students, Schneider’s narrator in “Vati” discovers: “Wir sind, wie immer wir uns dazu verhalten, die Soehne und Toechter der Vaeter, wir sind nicht die Kinder der Opfer.” (42)

The heaviest critique can be seen when Schneider “squeals on the thief but lets the mass murderer get away”. (Jensen 217) While many sons and daughters of Nazi criminals did not choose to confront their fathers’ past and avoided looking at their culpability, there had been an attempt by many Germans to do more than “renounce all personal obligation to work through the Nazi legacy that they had inherited...” and to provide the beginning of a work that might never end but always change.

2.1.5. Summary/Conclusion

Schneider’s protagonist is in a difficult position between protecting his Vati or delivering him, torn between monster and Vati. Ultimately he protects the father from those who hunt him. The son is an example of many children of war criminals whose lives had become crippled by the crimes of their fathers and for some this constituted a breakdown in the child/father relationship, while on the other hand many had the desire to understand the father, repair and even foster their relationships. Schneider’s son understands that “rejecting his elder means repressing a part of his own identity.” (Jensen 6) Schneider’s son goes on an emotional roller-coaster ride similar to that of other children of infamous Nazi criminals, full

of hatred for the father, rage about the world, even the Jews or his father's hunters, as their actions put him in a position he doesn't want to be in. (Schneider 42) These sentences describe emotions of many children of war criminals. They describe human emotions. The narrator is victim of his father's past, yet he is victim as he was "born guilty" without ever having done anything but have Mengele as his father. If Schneider's protagonist is overwhelmed by the individual and family responsibility, he also realises that there is an even larger-scale responsibility – that of an entire nation.

As we have seen, in the eyes of his many critics such as McGlothlin or Maelshagen, Schneider's lack of authority over the events he describes, the lack of authenticity and auto-biographical ownership, ultimately deny "Vati" the classification of Väterliteratur. However, I conclude the book is part of the German Erinnerungsliteratur as it deals with the narrator's past and has an auto-biographical analogy to the real case of Josef and Rolf Mengele, as well as being – while fictional - personal and subjective. The text is a valid attempt to examine the situation in the context of the student movement, and to provide a deeper private analysis of the narrator's situation. It portrays the generational conflicts between war and post-war generation however, the narrator does not come to terms with the father's past and cannot extract an admission of guilt from the father nor bridge the gap that exists between them. The text fails in terms of helping the son with his own life. In the end he remains a son who somewhat excuses his father, and a son who accepts that his original pursuit has failed and his own entanglement will always exist. The only definite stance the narrator makes is not to deliver the father. The narrator risks a certain ambivalence by wanting to understand and ultimately extends a certain kind of empathy towards the father.

The narrator could be accused of calling the rejection of their fathers by the 1968 student movement a “patricide” (Schneider 28) and that he never really showed any empathy or sympathy for his friend and the student movement, but manages to feel a certain empathy for his father. Peter Schneider himself had been part of the student movement in the 1960s but stated after the publication of Grass’ “Im Krebsgang” that it was the biggest failure of the German Left not to have felt enough empathy for their parents’ generation: “[...]das grösste Versäumnis der deutschen Linken bestünde darin, sich nicht um das Leiden der Elterngeneration geschert zu haben.” (Welzer 57) For Welzer this “[...] verrät eine Dialektik bundesrepublikanischer Vergangenheitstradierung, die allein dank der Autosuggestion, jetzt auf der anderen Seite zu stehen, ignoriert werden konnte. Zu dieser Dialektik gehoert zudem die Unterstellung, die Kriegsgeneration wuerde ihre Schuld verdraengen, was logischerweise voraussetzt, sie haette eine solche ueberhaupt empfunden. [...]Denn jetzt handelt es sich nicht mehr um die Schuld der Elterngeneration an dem, was im Dritten Reich geschehen war, sondern um die Schuld der Kinder, ihr gegenueber die gebuehrende Empathie verweigert zu haben.” (57) Schneider’s narrator wanted to highlight the victim complex of his own generation who claimed they were nothing but victims of the fathers’ past though he did not commit any crimes, but he also lets himself assume a position in which honest and open reflection about redemption is fathomable. As Vati suggests, the narrator’s impetus for telling his father’s story is not the drive to uncover the objective truth of what his father actually did in the Holocaust and why he did it, but rather an overwhelming anxiety about his own connection to his father’s guilt. Because the narrator perceives himself as victimised by that past he ultimately fails to take responsibility, and ends the narrator’s introspection and search for his own entangled identity and self-exploration in relation to the father’s guilt. The protagonist seems to be spurred on by a questionable emotional identification process during his stay in South America, and ultimately his cogitation fails as he does not succeed in terms

of releasing himself from his “schuldlos schuldbeladenen Leben” though the release seemed possible. Schneider must have had a lot of courage to consider a redemptive stance, and from a literary point of view Schneider can only be described as audacious in portraying the ambivalence of being son of a Nazi criminal such as Mengele.

For the reading of the text it is imperative we do not mistake Peter Schneider for “Vati’s” protagonist.

2.2. Niklas Frank “Mein Vater. Eine Abrechnung”, 1987

2.2.1. Author background

Niklas Frank was born in 1939 and grew up in Cracow, Poland and Neuhaus am Schliersee. In 1987 he published his text “Mein Vater. Eine Abrechnung.” Frank was a cultural journalist for the Stern magazine in which a series about his father was published. Up until recently Niklas travelled through Germany, Europe and also countries such as Israel and the US to speak to people about his life with guilt and shame as his father was “the butcher of Poland”. He was also a journalist of crisis in the Iraqi war. Frank has written a play about his father, appeared in TV productions such as “Hitler’s children” in 2012, and also published a text about his mother (2005) and one of his brothers (2013). Niklas condemned Norman. Both of their lives were extremely influenced by the father’s past and both injured in different ways. Norman asks Niklas if there is any point to his constant “self-laceration”. The scenarios in the new book are no less heart wrenching than in “Mein Vater”. Niklas writes about how Norman becomes an alcoholic, the second son drinks himself to death with thirteen litres of

milk per day, the oldest daughter becomes drug dependent while the second kills herself with rat poison and Niklas, well, he „screams helplessly”. (“Bruder Norman“ Frank)

Niklas Frank was 7 years old when his father was executed. Today Niklas Frank lives with his wife in Itzehoe, north of Hamburg.

2.2.2. Perpetrator background

Hans Michael Frank was born in 1900, and died by hanging on 16 October 1946 as one of the most notorious Nazis. Frank joined the army in 1917. After the war he joined the German Workers Party which became the NSDAP in 1919, making him one of the party's earliest members. After his law studies he became Hitler's personal legal adviser. In 1933 he became Nazi Germany's chief jurist and Minister of Justice in Bavaria. Between 1939 and 1945 he was directly involved in the mass murder of hundreds of thousands of Jews and other civilians. In September 1939 Frank was assigned as Chief of Administration in occupied Poland. In October 1939, following the end of the invasion of Poland, Frank was assigned Governor-General of the occupied Polish territories. He oversaw the segregation of Jews into ghettos and the use of Polish civilians as forced and compulsory labourers. As such his activities made him Number One on President Roosevelt's list of war criminals. Though Frank was not one of the “most powerful of men in the hierarchy of the Third Reich”, under his rule and assistance the innocent lives of millions of people were taken. (Klessmann 39-47) Frank was said to model himself into a replica of Hitler's”. (43) Frank's General Gouvernement was the location of four of the six German extermination camps. Frank later claimed he had nothing to do with the extermination of the Jews which he said was entirely

controlled by Himmler and the SS. Frank and his family fled the General Gouvernement in 1945 as the Soviet Army was approaching. He was captured in Bavaria by American troops on 3 May 1945.

Frank tried to commit suicide twice while in captivity. He was charged with war crimes and tried before the International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg. Frank voluntarily surrendered 42 volumes of his personal diaries to the Allies which were used against him as they provided all the evidence of his crimes. Though he expressed remorse on the witness stand, he wavered between penitence for his crimes and blaming the Allies as well as Soviets, Poles and Czechs for an equal share of wartime atrocities.

Frank was married to Brigitte Herbst (1895-1959). They had five children: Sigrid (1927), Norman (1928), Brigitte (1935), Michael (1937) and Niklas, the youngest, was born in 1939.

2.2.3. Content and style

“Abrechnung” is a settling of accounts or a reckoning. This text broke the taboo of filial love. When Frank’s series in “The Stern” magazine came out in the 1980s, many readers wrote to the magazine that a son should not have judged his father like Niklas had. This was the collective voice, even of the media. (Klessmann 43) Frank says he was hurt to have been labelled a psycho but that there had been no discussions, no debates or reactions by politicians, just malice and ridicule. (43)

Niklas Frank used the files of post-war criminal investigation and from the Nuremberg trials as evidence – rich sources of information which lead to his father's death by hanging. Niklas was able to explore the difference in his father's – often seemingly falsified – diaries and the retrospective interpretation of the evidence gathered by the courts which legally provided the most important and true collection of evidence against Hans Frank.

The text is written from the I-perspective, structured as a lengthy and powerful second person address to his father in the form of an imaginary dialogue. The text is organised in chapters with headings. Frank makes reference to the documents he has found, and he also displays some photos within the text. In brackets we often find Niklas' own thoughts and emotions. The often violent and hatred-filled tone of the book is a reaction to Niklas' disappointment and despair at not only his father's, but that of many Germans inability to achieve the slightest bit of comprehension and responsibility for the evil of their acts. Ralph Girdano writes in the foreword that those who deem Frank's language vulgar or excessive, sexist or over the top, do not understand that even after 50 years of absolute freedom of information, no human language could ever express the evil of the Holocaust. (Frank 6)

In Frank's text, every step of his father's life and Nazi career, and every imperfection in his father's character is viewed from Niklas' personal and highly subjective viewing point. While Frank often gets carried away with hatred and rage, the findings are based on personal and official documents. We follow Hans Frank up the Nazi ladder and accompany him through his downfall. It is a story of a father's terrible self-satisfaction, greed, excess and personal gain, ambition, opportunism and corruption - a story of an accessory into the murder and genocide of thousands of human beings. Niklas is in search for answers to the question of

whether his father ever genuinely recognized any evil behind his actions, and if the father ever felt any true remorse as opposed to the fake religious transformation that the father said had taken place while he was in prison. Niklas never excused his father in terms of his father's persona being shaped by the choices he made in the context of World War II, or the framework of structures produced by the regime he worked for – in Niklas' eyes the father is guilty no matter what the circumstances and complexities of the values, beliefs and decisions that drove the war and Holocaust.

In the text we find a son that deals in no uncertain terms with his Nazi father. It is called a reckoning and it is such. A photo of his father's corpse, and the sexual fantasies it aroused in Niklas caused outrage in Germany, and some of the critics and readers called it abusive and dismissed it as an act of filthy nest-fouling. In his research Niklas can only find in his father "a typical German monster". (24) He reflects that many Germans even felt pity for Hans Frank, even in the face of "ovens full of Jews in which the virtue of love for the father was not allowed to burn" (24) Niklas' critique is at post-war Germany, a country that while outwardly largely defining itself in terms of the critical treatment of the Nazi past and its historical responsibility for the Holocaust, privately fails to come to terms with the past in an honest and open way.

Hans Frank is a man completely devoid of principles. He comes across as a person that doesn't ever really reflect at all, seems superficial and completely self-centred. His language and chilling hate speeches against Jews and Poles are made up of the standard jargon and euphemisms of the Nazi regime, and his hatred of Jews can be seen as expedient and advisable to further his own position. Frank even used his position and ideology in the plight

for a divorce from his wife, which he said would be the ultimate sacrifice he could ask of her. Brigitte refused the sacrifice even after her husband had confessed involvement in mass murder – it simply reduced to a bargaining tactic in their private wranglings, and obviously not as important as fur coats and glory. (182)

At the Nuremberg trial Frank tried to save himself by stressing his enmity with Himmler and even Hitler, and though we know there had been attempts to restrict the expansion of the SS state by Frank, and also speeches asking for the violence to stop and requests to uphold the law, they really had nothing to do with securing the rule of law but everything to do with the destructive power struggles that were widespread in the Nazi hierarchy. Frank's greediness and nepotism, his delusions of grandeur and spinelessness delivered him easily into his rivals' hands once his downfall in the Nazi hierarchy began.

2.2.4. The father perpetrator and the son

Niklas was seven years old when his father was hung. He relays his imaginary witnessing of the hanging of his father: "Das Ende eines Verbrechers, ein Bonze war gehenkt, ein hoch- und zutiefst gebildeter Deutscher, der die Wahrheiten der Dichtung, der Musik kannte und sie fuer einen Horch, einen Mercedes, einen Salonwagen verkaufte." (17) These sentences lead us into the story about gluttony, greed and cowardice which was the story of the "butcher of Poland".

Niklas writes of his childhood days which he describes as "royal" but also as lonely. (17-18) Hans was no loving and caring father to the children. Niklas would have longed for such a

relationship like any child. He cannot remember much fondness between them. However, Niklas did note that in the last letter by his father to him, he spelt Niklas' name with "ck" showing the father's complete indifference.

The Frank residence was furnished with stolen furniture, paintings and other valuables. Virtually the entire art possessions of Poland, private and public, was seized by the General-Gouvernement in the course of six months. Frank's wife was famous for extorting fur coats from Jews and Poles, and trafficking food items between the General-Gouvernement and The Reich. Niklas also wrote a book about his mother in 2005. ("Meine deutsche Mutter" Frank)

Frank conducted his politics and policies as a means to destroy the Polish cultural and spiritual life, and to get rid of the Polish upper class and Polish intelligentsia. He imposed an obligation to work for all Polish people so that the demand for industrial and arable workers for the Reich was covered, and was responsible for the deportation of a million Polish workers to the Reich as well as the deportation of Jews to the Ghettos of his General-Gouvernement and to the concentration camps outside of his General-Gouvernement. As Michael Wildt states, Frank said in front of party members on the 25th of November 1939 that it was a joy to him "to attack the Jewish race. The more that die, the better." (in Wildt 150) Frank was concerned with the completion of the national socialist tasks in the East while claiming he was concerned with the construction of a state of the law. The Polish population called Frank "the butcher of Poland".

He accused the father as the “the prototype of a German criminal who with a PhD, law firm and an assistant position at the Technische Hochschule in Munich oversaw the precise killing of human beings while never getting his hands dirty himself.” (22) With these words Niklas gives us an indication as to Hans Frank’s commitment to Nazi ideology. A murderer who does not get his hands dirty but provided the conditions for the genocide of the Polish population. He finds his father’s life in documents, photos, letters and in witness accounts and calls it a “pile of dirt”. Niklas feels his biggest treasures are his father’s sentences, especially those said in public such as that “he does not care if they make mincemeat out of the Poles after the war” or “If I make a placard for every seven Poles I order to be shot, there would not be enough timber in the Polish forests to produce sufficient paper”. (28)

Niklas writes about his father’s ascent and intertwines this with his own thoughts of what the father could have done differently. Niklas also proves his father was a liar. In his diaries, Frank writes that he had constant struggles against Hitler, Himmler and Bormann, and that he, Frank, was the only one upholding the law. (Frank 86) However, there had been no protest from Frank regarding the “Ermächtigungs-gesetz”, “Arier-schutzgesetz”, “Enteignungsgesetz” and “Berufsverbote”. All of his assertions were mere lip service and lies.

In the series “Personenbeschreibung”, Niklas Frank states that there was nothing satanic about his father (nor Hitler) and no higher power forced them to be evil – “they were just criminals”.^{iv} Niklas hopes that one day he will overcome his father’s legacy, maybe when he is an old man. In an interview with the West Deutscher Rundfunk in Germany at the beginning of 2014, 73 year old Niklas Frank said he feels like his father was always with him

and therefore he is his father's "puppet" ^v like a "Schweinsrüssel" in his brain. (Frank 29)

Niklas Frank said in an interview with Alexander Schwabe in 2005 that it is not easy for him to write about his parents, and that he cannot get over their crimes. (Schwabe) Niklas said that he "could never have reconciled with his parents" and his autobiographical "Abrechnung" is a personal, emotional and sometimes even comical attempt to exorcise his father's demon – a quest which seems to fail. Niklas pitilessly exposes the endless excuses, self-deception and lies with which his father justified and celebrated his deadly power.

It is also Niklas' aim to make sure we do not forget that behind the perpetrators was a society that had not only an impact on the war and Holocaust, but that generated and supported it; a society that tolerated the perpetrators. In my opinion Niklas sometimes goes too far in basing his critique on Germany on stereotypes and generalisations – the critique on post-war Germany seems a little clichéd, and the intensity of the loathing of his father goes hand in hand with the savage condemnation of German society. The Holocaust created a moral debt to the victims from which we cannot and should not escape. Niklas has always been asking of Germans to shoulder the legacy of perpetration and to acknowledge the evil, and only then will Germany have an opportunity for the renewal of moral integrity and human dignity.

After the father was captured by the Americans, Brigitte and the children must have had an anxious time. The house was plundered and taken over, the family was forced to move and live on 300 German Mark per month. In addition to these traumatic events, the realisation that husband and father was a major war criminal would have been immense for the family, and lead to some of the Frank children to despise their father. After Hans Frank was captured, jailed and hanged, the Frank children had a hard time enrolling in schools, were discriminated

against by their teachers and peers, and were constantly accused of being Nazis. (S and N Lebert 135)

In prison Frank attempted to cut his own throat. (Frank 272) Niklas feels some pity thinking about this: „...und ich decke mein aufbrausendes Mitleid zu” (273) but soon covers the pity up with the images of his father’s victims.

The taboo of filial love was broken by this son, and some critics and readers felt the text was a worse crime than those Hans Frank himself had committed. Niklas was accused of committing a sin against his father, also by his immediate family, and especially his siblings.^{vi} Niklas feels at the Nuremberg trials, his father could have lead the way for Germans by accepting his part in the crimes of the Nazis, but he didn’t. Hans Frank continued to make excuses and lied, accusing Himmler and Krueger of the destruction of Polish Jewry, trying to blame Hitler for using his people as pawns and that not even 1000 years would be enough to take the guilt away from Germany. (Frank 304) But then the father fell back into his cowardly stance, lies about not having known about Majdanek until 1944 when the Russian accuser had a written report from Frank to Hitler dated 19 June 1943, where he names Majdanek as one of the concentration camps alongside Auschwitz. (309)

Niklas is reading about the court proceedings in what he calls a “fulminante Reprint-Ausgabe der Nuernberger Prozess-Protokolle, neue deutsche Prosa schlechthin, meine Hausbibel, aus der ich, wo immer ich bin, wann immer ich aufschlage, nur deutsche Feigheit, deutsches Wimmern, deutsche Luegenkunde ziehe – ein Lehrbuch fuer die Bundesrepublik.” (Frank

308) Niklas Frank is enraged not just about the father's cowardice but that of those who not only portrayed themselves as victims of Hitler's regime but those who lied, denied or kept silent about their own involvement or claiming they had only followed orders, the ones who blamed others or those who compared their crimes to those of the Allies or Russians, and those who to this day do not take responsibility for the heinous crimes committed under the Nazi regime. Niklas wants us to all feel ashamed, to face the facts, and only from the personal approach can we stop evil before it happens. (in Schwabe)

Just before his death Hans Frank finished his testimony. He stated that - though he earlier claimed 1000 years would not be enough to erase Germany's debt, now he felt that Germany's enemies had behaved just as bad committing crimes on German victims, and because of all those crimes the guilt of the German folk already had been wiped away completely (Frank 312) Here we witness the real Hans Frank.

Niklas had mentioned God in his text. Niklas accuses God to have mercilessly taken part right up to the gas chambers (179), and Niklas also feels God would be happy about how amazingly well he created the "murderous German folk". (231) But exactly at the point of his father stating that Germany's guilt is already redeemed, God reveals himself to Niklas, the 7 year old Niklas, as an arm coming down from heaven in which the arm shows millions of screaming corpses, and the arm reaches for the father's heart and pulls him inside out so that Niklas can see his father's heart beating. While it beats into his face, Niklas bites into it, releasing a scream from the father and drowning Niklas with the father's blood. When the heart has stopped, Niklas turns into an ever-eternal zombie jumping away, again and again jumping away. (312-313) This scene at the end of the text shows the complete rage of Niklas,

his immense hatred and incredible hurt. He wants to silence this perpetrator once and for all. He wants to execute his father so he cannot hurt him or anyone else anymore, and with his blood he can pay for the father's sins. But while his father is dead, Niklas himself comes to live as an "eternally childlike zombie" that has to endure the father's crimes day in and day out. The ending of the text is not venomous nor the betrayal of a son. It is a scream by a son unable to be released, unable to exorcise the demon father that accompanies him through his life.

Hans Frank was a perpetrator committed to the Nazi ideology and hiding behind the law who indicated his decisions were simply made as they "dienten den Interessen des Krieges". We know this is not true. The text shows us the total inability of this perpetrator for honest self-reflection and shows his self-deception. It is a story of how yet another renowned jurist and man of culture became a Nazi perpetrator through greed and gluttony. Christopher Browning's words: "The personal adjustment that each had to make flowed so naturally out of the logic of his past conception of the Jewish questions, and dovetailed so completely with his own career self-interest, that there was no sudden crisis of conscience, no traumatic agonising, no consciousness of crossing an abyss, virtually no foot-dragging and only occasional attempts to escape personal involvement, provided of course that it could be done without damage to career." ("Bureaucracy and Mass Murder" Browning 143) also describe traits of this perpetrator. Hans Frank never felt he had crossed an abyss or broken with civilisation being part of the Nazi regime – he was more concerned with his career and his image, wealth and reputation, the German interests of war and was completely incapable of self-reflection.

Niklas Frank's reckoning with his Nazi father is intensely subjective and personal. It is a tormented and appallingly forceful and anguished text. Due to the incredibly personal account, the range of emotions from sadness and shame, to rage and hatred, it is no wonder that from time to time Niklas abandons objectivity, especially when it comes to post-war Germany's handling of its "Vergangenheitsbewältigung".

2.2.5. Summary/Conclusion

Niklas Frank says today that though he used to think that Germany would have to pay for the genocide of the Jews, he thinks that there are no ghosts that will come to ask for that debt to be paid, and he feels life is stronger than the past.^{vii} Niklas Frank never gave up educating people about evil and the responsibility people have to ward it off before it takes hold. Niklas seems to have become kinder towards the German nation and himself. Outside of Germany, people seem to have understood his text in a different context – a text of a German who had tried to come to terms with the German past and that of his father, a high ranking Nazi. He was seen as a German who walked through hell for the whole of the nation. Lebert says that Niklas stopped his countrymen from "taking the road of dishonesty"^{viii}, and Robert Klemptner - during the International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg assistant U.S. chief counsel - called the text a contribution in the promotion of human rights.

Niklas' stance is that even those who are born after the war should feel shame and horror. He mentions his feelings of shame about his father who was unable to reflect on his actions, who was convinced he was acting in the name of a higher ideal, who kicked the law with his feet whenever it meant personal gain or advancement and the satisfaction of his greed and

gluttony. Niklas feels no conflict between loyalty and repulsion like many other children of Nazis have done; for him there is no refuge in a dualism between public and private, loyalty and repulsion nor does he seek it.

As Niklas had never really known his father, he had no desire to reconcile possible contradictory aspects of his father's life and personality, and for that reason it might have been easier for Niklas to condemn him. It is much harder to condemn people if we believe they were victims of circumstances themselves, or people who commit crimes and atrocities when at the same time they are loving fathers and husbands. The efforts to reconcile the fathers' guilt and their own is a recurring theme in the texts of Väterliteratur but Niklas Frank does not belong into the category – he just wants to tell the truth about his father, even though he sometimes slips into the role of a son as an executioner – he even steps up as an imagined prosecutor at his father's trials. In the end Niklas stays a child-like zombie who knows he might never be free of this father.

This is not only about a Nazi perpetrator, but also a text about a family perpetrator that seems totally oblivious and indifferent to his children, as well as cruel to his wife while his personal objectives were focused on careerism, how to save his own neck whilst blaming others for the murder of millions of human beings, sexual gratification with numerous affairs, and someone who really made a "Mördergrube" out of his heart.

This Nazi had a prior commitment to anti-Semitism and was a committed ideologist, a Nazi that was in it for his own economic gain, his own reputation and recognition, his career

advancement – a cynic, more disturbing than insane. Niklas also stated that his father was in love with Hitler, so it could be the case of a personal infatuation with the Führer that motivated Hans Frank as well. (Weber in HNA 2013)

Niklas shows many times that his father had options – even if the suggestions are not always realistic or seem farfetched such as strangling Hitler. Instead we find a perpetrator who realised he would benefit from joining the Nazis, and who actively and creatively supported anti-Jewish and anti-Polish politics while claiming it was done “in accordance with the law”. This law was changed or never upheld and millions ended up murdered. He was a mediocre and cowardly perpetrator, was also competitive and seemed to vie constantly for Hitler’s acceptance and recognition. Though he protested his innocence in war crimes and crimes against humanity, the evidence against Frank was overwhelming. It was customary for the Nazis to put up a list of those executed and killed by the Nazis. Frank had publicly bragged that there would not be enough trees to make the paper required to list all of those killed under his leadership as Governor General.

Though we know Frank never got his hands dirty killing anyone and could therefore be described as yet another paradigmatic Nazi desk murderer, we also know he was no raving monster. He was one of the key protagonists in the Polish Holocaust, a committed man of action rather than a pen pusher. The “patricide” committed by Niklas needs to be seen as an attempted liberation for this tormented soul. It is not written to examine the entanglement of the son and what consequences that might have for the son. Niklas refuses to be entangled in the father’s crimes, yet he knows he is. He calls himself a zombie, an indication that his father’s actions and his crimes will be forever present in Niklas’ life. It seems that recently

Niklas learnt from his daughter that by writing his text he had “protected” her from her grandfather. He had shielded her from the grandfather as a fortification against evil, and with building this barrier, the grandfather had just “faded” from her memory.^{ix} Perhaps it is with this knowledge that Niklas might finally overcome the father’s legacy.

2.3. Martin Pollack “Der Tote im Bunker”, 2004

2.3.1. Author background

Martin Pollack was born in 1944 in Bad Hall, Austria. Before his birth his mother was married to Hans Pollack. During the marriage she had an affair with Dr. Gerhard Bast, Martin Pollack’s father, and subsequently she divorced Pollack and married Bast. Bast was born on 12 January 1911, he was a lawyer and SS-Sturmbannführer, chief of the Linz Gestapo and WWII Nazi war criminal. After Bast’s death Pollack’s mother re-married her ex-husband Hans Pollack, and Martin grew up with his step-siblings and took on his stepfather’s name. As a child he often visited his natural fathers’ parents who were staunch German-national-minded and anti-Semite. He completed an apprenticeship as a carpenter at a primary school in Upper Tauern lead under direct democratic principles. Here his interest in “everything from the East” grew. He studied Slavonic Studies and Eastern European History in Vienna and Warsaw, and worked as a translator and journalist for “Der Spiegel” where he was editor until 1998. Today Pollack is mainly concerned with writing such texts as “Anklage Vaternord. Der Fall Philipp Halsmann” and “Der Tote im Bunker. Ein Bericht ueber meinen Vater”. He lives in Austria (Bocksdorf), and sometimes in Berlin.

Martin Pollack has received numerous prizes for his work. He is Holder of the Knight's Cross of the Order of Merit of the Republic of Poland (2003) and was awarded, among others, the Austrian Booksellers Prize for Tolerance in Thought and Action (2007), the Karl Dedecius Translator Prize (2007), the Georg Dehio Book Prize (2010), Leipziger Buchpreis zur Europäischen Verständigung in 2011 and Stanislaw Vincenz Preis in 2012.

His texts are of a political nature and Erich Klein called him a “political historian of literature”. (in Klein) Pollack is known for his travel stories about Europe's East. “Der Tote im Bunker”, the story about his father and the text discussed here, is his only autobiographical work and was published in 2004. After finding out as a 14-year old that his father had been a high-ranking Nazi, Pollack was worried about what he might discover researching his father's life (Pollack 5) and hesitated for years before doing so.

2.3.2. Perpetrator background

Gerhard Bast was born in Gottschee (present day Slovenia) on 12 January 1911, and was shot on 9 March 1947. He was an Austrian jurist with a doctorate from the University of Graz (1935). He was brought up by parents and grandparents who were staunchly German-national, and it was with that background that he joined the NSDAP (1931), SS (1931) and Gestapo and SD after the Anschluss (both 1938). His brown storybook career began.

His work for the Gestapo started in Graz where he was “Abteilungsleiter für Gegnerforschung und – bekämpfung”. He soon joined the Gestapo in Koblenz and then Linz. In 1941 he became Sturmbannführer in the SS, and in the same year worked for the Gestapo in Muenster. Through his work for the Gestapo he was part of the deportation of Jews and also executions of Polish labourers.

In 1942 he was leader of a special taskforce (11a) which oversaw the murder of Jews, was then sent to lead the Gestapo in Linz in 1943, to later become leader of the taskforce 7a in 1944, followed by becoming the leader of his own special taskforce “Partisanenbekämpfung”. He also received several awards from the Nazi regime. At the end of the war he hid himself away as a farm labourer under false name. In March of 1947 while he was trying to return to his family in Innsbruck via the Brennerpass, he hired a man to lead him over the pass but was killed by that man. The exact circumstances of his demise are not clear but it seems an argument had broken out and Bast was shot. The murderer was sent to jail for 30 years in 1949.

2.3.3. Content and style

Martin Pollack did not call his text “Der Tote im Bunker” a novel or a novella or an account – he calls it a “report on his father”. This could be seen as the first indication that the text will be an objective and factual account, and Pollack will try and avoid making assumptions about his father. Pollack is a journalist, and the reader soon realises that this is an investigation for Martin Pollack.

Pollack sifted through thousands of public and family documents to make himself a picture of the father he had never known but knew to be involved in national socialism's biggest evil. His literary research is based on facts. He also has some sparse memories of his own, and talks with witnesses – including those in his immediate family. In addition he has his father's "Tourenbuch" – his travel journal. Pollack relays the impressions he has from visiting places or reading documents of significance.

Pollack reconstructs his father's story, and from that reconstruction he attempts to build a picture of who his father was. The text includes passages on the author's childhood and early adulthood. One of the main forms of style in *Väterliteratur* is the imagined or even remembered dialogue with the father but Pollack – as the author and the narrator of the text – holds no dialogue with this father compared to Niklas Frank who uses an imaginative dialogue in his text "Der Vater. Eine Abrechnung". Pollack relays information about the father and tends to stay as authentic and objective as possible whereas other authors, for instance Niklas Frank, wrote from a completely subjective point of view as compared to Niklas Frank. Pollack expresses hardly any emotions such as anger or rage or disappointment at his father in his quest to find the evidence as to how his father was implicated in the crimes of the Nazis. Pollack and the reader can be certain – by way of material evidence and also witness accounts – of this perpetrator's involvement as a high-ranking Nazi that was responsible for the persecution and death of Jews and others. In the end Pollack realises that he is not able to combine the images of his father that he found during his research – his lust for life evident in skiing trips and travel with friends, and his destructive streak evident in his love for guns and hunting, and on the other hand a Nazi criminal. Pollack considers reports, diary entries and photos of his father's, and remembers his grandmother's continued declarations as to his father's decency. However, there can be

no doubt that Bast's commando in the East was responsible for the deaths of over 90000 victims, mainly Jews. There is also evidence as to Bast's presence at executions and his pursuance of Jews or other undesirables, and a photo in the museum of Banska Bystrica showing corpses of people killed by the Bast Kommando.

Pollack asks many "what if" questions. (Pollack 221-222) But Pollack knows his father was a criminal, and he also says that he never felt particularly entangled with the father's history. (Klein) Pollack does not conceal his failure to "understand", but accepts it.

The text is written in the I-perspective from the author's point of view. Pollack researches his father's past not only to find out about the father and his involvement in the perpetration of the Third Reich and the Holocaust, but to find out about how these findings have influenced his own identity and worldview. He examines the political situation at the time of his father's upbringing as well as reflects on his own political awakening as adolescent. Pollack couples this examination with a portrayal of the ideological and historical events of the time embedded in his family's historiography. The report about his family and his father are a commitment by Pollack to tell the reader about his family's involvement in the perpetration of war and crimes against humanity. He also asks himself several times what, if anything, he could have inherited from such a father. (Pollack 62, 123)

Pollack structures his work on two levels. On the first level is Martin Pollack, the researcher in the present. This researcher speaks with many people, including family members to find the material for his research. The other level is based in the past, the life of his father and his

family. The author reflects on the things he finds out about his father's past, and reflects on that past and his own present. Andreas Breitenstein sees Pollack's work as: "vieles in einem: eine grosse erzählende Reportage, eine archäologische Spurensuche und ein mentalitätsgeschichtlicher Essay. Was hinzukommt, ist ein Familienroman und eine Entwicklungsgeschichte. Ästhetisch hat der Autor einem doppelten Anspruch zu genügen: dem heißen Herzen und dem kalten Auge, dem subjektiven Bekenntnis und der objektivierenden Geschichtsschreibung." (Breitenstein 45) Essentially Pollack does describe the "development" of his father from childhood to death including the involvement of the father with the Hitler regime, as well as trying to find answers about his own identity in his family's and his country's history.

The depiction of the past happens chronologically and meticulously. Pollack avoids fictionalisation in favour of complete authenticity. In the text there are many instances where Pollack uses phrases when he is unsure that indicate "what might have happened", for example "Vermutlich", "Vielleicht", "weiss ich nicht", "Wahrscheinlich", "Geht nicht hervor", "Kann ich nicht sagen", "Es ist anzunehmen", "Könnte ich mir gut vorstellen", "Irgendwann", "Angeblich". These phrases saturate the narrative. When he is certain he uses phrases such as: "Ich erinnere mich", "Sicher ist" or "Ich weiss noch". Pollack states that as a journalist he could use "creative nonfiction" and also confesses to the occasional mistake or uncertainty. (Klein)

Pollack accepts the image of his father as vague. (121) His stance aims to be non-judgemental but he doesn't want conciliation – he just wants to know the truth. While the investigation into the father-figure seems to fail in terms of shedding more light on the father

figure, the investigation into the Nazi case is a success as Pollack establishes there can be no doubt over his father's culpability.

If there is information Martin Pollack could not find, he did not fill the empty spaces with guesswork. His report is a private examination of a father who was unknown to the author (121-122), and not all facts can be found, which might prove frustrating to an inquisitive and investigative mind. Pollack's report fits into the category of auto-biographical literature. His style can be seen as documentary prose, a blend of essay writing and narrative reporting founded on meticulous archival research. Pollack's reconstruction of the past goes hand in hand with depicting the historical framework as a distinctive picture of the environment that provided the conditions in which his father rose as a Nazi criminal.

Pollack seems not as deeply entangled in guilt and rage as Niklas Frank in comparison, and Pollack was able to break away from his family when he was a young adult. He did not grow up under the curse of an "inculpatory" name such as Schneider's narrator or Niklas Frank.

2.3.4. The father perpetrator and the son

Pollack's report begins in Tüffer, today in Slovenia, an area that was hotly contested by German and Slavs, rich in racism and fascism. Gerhard studied the law just like his father had. He was an illegal member of the NSDAP in 1931. A year later he became member of the SS. Soon Pollack's father was deeply involved in the murderous evils of the Nazi regime. The book depicts in detail the circumstances of his father's young life at the beginning of 20th century Austria and Germany, and gives insight into the conditions leading to the rise of

National Socialism. Pollack describes the political structures and expansion of the NS-State in places such as Germany, Austria, Slovenia, Slovakia, Caucasus and Poland. (68-69) His feeling was that the youth of the time had “learned to hate the state and it’s politics, the Church, Bolsheviks, capitalists and the Jews, foreign powers that forbade Austria’s Anschluss to Germany, Slovaks that had stolen the Untersteiermark of Austria, and others, and they demanded all should follow a strong leader with absolute obedience and faith in the folk, völkisch unity and purity. For all that they were ready to fight political opponents, those who thought differently, Christian socialists and Reds, if need be to the blood with no regards to any laws. It is this climate in which Gerhard Bast grew up and which Pollack depicted as an excellent image of the mentality of the time. The area had been engulfed by right wing radical policies that flourished after Germany’s defeat during WWI. The punitive nature of the Versailles treaty, Germany’s wounded national pride, political breakdown and social chaos, fear of rampant communism from the East and the association of Jews with Bolshevism, peer-pressure and conformity within a highly-regimented totalitarian society were all conditions that helped the Nazi regime with its cause. Slovaks and German-speaking rivals lived in an environment of hatred, racism and radicalism. Gerhard Bast had been born into a racist and anti-Semitic family which were hard core German-nationals conditioned to hatred, violence and anti-Semitism.

As a ten year old Pollack’s grandmother gave him racist books for his birthday and Christmas. In the text the reader is not introduced to dysfunctional or sadistic pathological monster grandparents, nor do we ever hear that the father seemed dysfunctional or sadistic. However, their racism is found in their day to day lives, the remarks they make, in letters they write, in the intonation of speech when talking about things foreign or Jewish, and of course

in the choice of party membership and careers. They were committed ideologists conditioned by hatred of those foreign and different.

Bast was a hunter, mountaineer and skier. His grandfather, Dr. Rudolf Bast (also a lawyer) was a hard-core Nazi working on the “Arisierung” in Amstetten. In 1931 Pollack’s father joined the illegal NSDAP (rank: “Kriegsrechtsamtsleiter”), and in 1932 he joined the SS. He also joined the Gestapo a few days after the “Anschluss”. Pollack states that as a member of the Gestapo his father was basically, from the first day, part of the terror regime of the Nazis and would have known what was going on. In 1942 he was second in charge to the head of Gestapo in Muenster where he was responsible for the transportation of Muenster Jews to Riga. Most of those transported under Bast’s command did not survive. Witnesses reported that Bast checked the transportation of these Jews personally at the train station deportation point, and also lead and witnessed executions with “obvious pleasure”. (151-152) When he was not sending Jews off to the East, he was executing Polish workers with special portable gallows. (151-152) Bast then became the leader of a special troupe to cleanse parts of Southern Russia of Jews, communists and functionaries. This special commando killed around 90000 people between 1941 and 1943, mostly Jews. Martin Pollack researched his father’s guilt meticulously with historical documentation that can leave no doubt as to his guilt and culpability.

In May 1945 Bast disappeared as a wanted war criminal. He left a letter for Martin with the wish his son take on his name which Martin did not do, though he did consider it for a while.(232) In the denial of the father's wish, Pollack demonstrates distance and separation from his father. In March 1947 the father tried to abscond via the Brenner where he was

executed by a man that was going to smuggle him over the mountains from Tirol. His body was found on 6 April 1947.

Pollack's grandparents exerted a great influence over Martin as well, and we could say that they add another level to the text. Pollack looks back at the times he spent with his grandparents and remembers the grandfather fondly. He knows about his grandfather's involvement in WWII and him making his living by liquidating Jewish businesses. As a child and young adolescent, Pollack had a strong emotional attachment to his grandparents as had other authors of Väterliteratur.

After the war, his grandparents were in total denial as to their involvement or that of their son in the Nazi machinery and they both told Martin his father had been a "decent man", and that they all had been decent people with no real connection to the Nazis. (125) Pollack notes that they all felt they were victims, and that now they were being punished and discriminated against. (*"Warum Wurden die Stanislaws Erschossen?"* Pollack 16-17) Pollack had grown up with these "victim legends". Victimisation was a common excuse of Nazi perpetrators who, after the fall of Hitler's regime, saw themselves as having fallen victims to Hitler and his regime and the belief that they had only been pawns in the events. We must see this rather common assertion of being "decent" people essentially as an instance of Holocaust denial.

But we must also remember if subjectivity is a characteristic of Väterliteratur, then victimisation by the father's Nazi past could be easily inherited as traumatisation. As such

they would be very real, subjective emotions. In the perusal of the text I could not find any indication that Pollack feels victimised by his father and family's past. He seems not even very haunted by the legacies he inherited from the family. Pollack seeks to understand what was happening in his father's life that made him take the path he took, and while Pollack doesn't condemn the father nor feels any empathy with his father, he has moments where the ambivalence of his position, and the inability to get a clear and concise image of his father seem to burden him.

In terms of the perpetration of war and Holocaust, the perceived victimisation is prevalent especially in Pollack's grandparents. We find no proof that Bast was a sadistic monster at home or towards Pollack's mother or his parents. He was educated and enjoyed hobbies such as skiing and mountaineering with friends – a civilised human being that had been conditioned to do the jobs that were asked of him. The father is said to have let “escape eight Jews once that had been discovered in a forest, and apparently had always conducted himself in a humane manner without being an anti-Semite.” (Pollack 214) The grandmother stated that the father was an idealist, just like the grandparents, and that he had only done what he did out of a deep belief – as they all had.”(103) Another explanation was given according to Pollack in the 60s by some members of the Gestapo who attested they “had not agreed with the executions of the Poles but had only done their jobs as they were ordered to do.” (152) Bound to authority and orders, these perpetrators said they did what was commanded of them, whether they liked their orders or not.

Martin knows that his father's life was filled with violence until his violent death. (5) Pollack found a photo of his father which shows him as a small child around three years with a gun, a

rifle capable of killing birds and squirrels. (46) From an early age Bast was used to guns and hunting. From an early age he was also used to the rift between Slovenes and “German-speaking”, and the racism and right-wing extremism that was flourishing around him. The narrator sees this as an omen for something that was to come decades later. (26) The conditions for genocide with its intentional destruction of a whole people were rife at the time Bast joined the Nazi party and SS.

Not ever having known his father and starting to research his father’s life after his death, provided Pollack the needed distance to his research. He indicates many times that asking questions was “not done” in his family.

Pollack is non-confrontational, he states the facts but does not judge his relatives directly – though his decision to break with his grandmother in his teenage years was a powerful statement. He never returned to mend the relationship. The traits of his family members are embedded in the investigation he conducts and as such are merely facts. He does not get emotionally involved. He does however judge the inadequacies in the handling of the question of their guilt. Time has also given Pollack a distance that enables a different attitude in him to the past and his father’s crimes. Even though Pollack is writing about his father as a second generation author, I quote Tania Dücker when she speaks about the third generation of authors. I feel that Pollack perhaps fit better into this context, also because of his professional traits as a journalist and researcher, with regards to this distance. Tania Dücker describes: “Ich glaube, dass meine Generation einen eigenen Beitrag leisten kann zu dieser Vergangenheitsbewältigung. Die 68er hatten doch ein emotional angestrengetes Verhältnis zu den Eltern, zu der Tätergeneration,[...]. Meine Generation ist die erste, die einen

nüchternen Blick auf dieses Thema wagen kann. [...] Nicht umsonst ist die Protagonistin meines Romans Naturwissenschaftlerin, Meteorologin. Ich wollte diesen forschenden Zugang. Es ging mir nicht darum, dass die Enkelin mit den Grosseltern bricht. Die Grosseltern sollten zum Erinnern bewogen werden.” (“Der nüchterne Blick der Enkel” Dückers) Pollack intends to cast this “sober look” with his report. Pollack did however cause a rupture between his generation and that of his grandmothers’ and he was not successful in prompting her to admit any responsibility at all, or the most as being idealists. Pollack is casting a sober look at his father’s life, and maintains a great distance to this perpetrator. Pollack’s life was not destroyed by his father’s actions as much as Niklas’ was by his father. Pollack has a new consciousness of the attitude that the authors of Väterliteratur hold towards their families’ pasts and the position this past occupies in the contemporary, post-unification literary arena. While his text does not aim at conciliation or covering up his family’s past, or even at understanding his family’s position in the perpetration of war and Holocaust, he seems to conduct this research so the reader can form his own judgement. The Leitmotif for Pollack is to portray the facts in a situational framework that show the conditions at the time his father rose as a Nazi, and the life and history that evolved from that. Pollack says that the family did not even talk about it, and was told by the grandmother to say his father was “Regierungsrat” should he be asked. (Pollack 88)

This wall of silence or lies were common in German and Austrian post-war families. After 1945, Austrians saw themselves as victims of German fascism, and collectively faded out their own involvement in, and acceptance of, the perpetration of war and Holocaust. The wall of silence regarding the Nazi era was prevalent in all areas of life, that of the family being a mirror image of society. There were critics such as Adorno or Mitscherlich but the general public fended off coming to terms with and taking responsibility for the Nazi evils and their

own entanglement in it. Pollack feels that there was a “collective amnesia” for his country as well as his family, and denial, renunciation, re-interpretation and trivialisation were characteristic for Austria. (203)

17-year old Pollack did not want to close his eyes and ears, and soon actively pursued the search for the truth about his families’ involvement with the Nazis. Pollack had researched this family history many years before he actually started writing “Der Tote im Bunker”.

Pollack reflects that a person of his father’s standing and education, background and intelligence certainly knew what was going on. He was in the Gestapo and SS by choice, fully aware of what he was doing and what he might be asked to do. He knew about the agendas that would make him a part of Hitler’s terror regime. Why and how educated and highly civilised people could become willing parts in Hitler’s regime is to this day an issue widely researched. However, Pollack states he did not find any evidence that suggests his father was a “rabiater Antisemit”. (106) Pollack also reports there seemed humanity in his father. Witnesses attested that his father apparently let prisoners escape. But there is an insurmountable gap between knowing and not knowing, between reasoning and emotions that even Pollack can’t close. It must be said that Pollack is taking an honest look at the evidence he finds and he does not hide anything. He does not excuse nor condemn. He clearly shows how disgusted he is, not just with his father and family members, but also after the war when Austrians seemed to just carry on with a mixture of silence and a clear conscience.

Pollack is also puzzled by the family's dark secret, the secret of Guido, the half-Jewish son of the grandfather's sister, Josefine. She had married a Jew in Zagreb. Pollack finds photos of his family sitting around a table drinking and eating with Guido while their jobs commanded them to free the country of Jews, Slovenes and Slovaks and other undesirables. (112) In private the Basts sat at a table with a half-Jewish nephew and cousin – a place where racism had no apparent place. Here again we find the caesura between private and public, personal and official.

Pollack could be criticised that his own thoughts and emotions do not feature much at all in the text. He does not make a strong stand against the Nazi perpetrators in his family. He provides some clues as to what his family life has meant for him. Objectivity in his investigation is most important to him. An explanation might also be found when Pollack states that the tricky familial relationships were reason for the silence about the perpetrator father. (123) Talking about the family's involvement in the Nazi crimes was taboo. Pollack knows that the "few short, sharp comments about the father were attempts by family members to hide emotions, and the general conduct in his family was devoid of intimacy". (123) He feels that part of him has taken on the legacy of the family to maintain a wall of silence when it comes to the involvement of the family in National Socialism, which is similar to the wall of silence that could be found post-war in Germany and Austria, and he also feels crippled by the family's inability and unwillingness to show and talk about emotions which he feels is deep-rooted in himself. It is Pollack, and so many of the post-war generation, that now felt obliged to take down those walls bit by bit, in private as well as in public, to show they are able to face the guilt of their forefathers.

Pollack feels his time away from his family for over nine years to go to boarding school in Felbertal had “immunised” against certain influences from his family, and his young teachers taught him “tolerance and a democratic mindset”. (172) The distance from the family helped Martin Pollack to find his own way which included tolerance of others, and the development of a critical and objective mind. While Pollack is objective, there are instances of frustration and some anger towards the family members but there is never any self-pity in his reporting.

It is interesting that Pollack’s research goes beyond the figure of his father in terms of alluding to facets of other fathers at the time, and the grandparents are also important as they are seen as not only Pollack’s immediate role models, but also as prototypes of many Nazi criminals found in Germany and Austria. These fathers/grandfathers show attitudes and traits such as narcissism, self-righteousness and authority that might have compensated for personal weakness. Central to this family figure are denial and cover-ups, latent tendencies to violence which leads to the involvement in the war machinery, and wanting to serve in the war or specifically at the front or in places of control and power. This tendency to violence is also demonstrated in the love for hunting and guns. Central to this kind of father figure is also the wish to serve the country and the Fuehrer which lead to membership in the Nazi Party and the career paths these perpetrators chose. To the Nazi regime they sold their souls, personal scruples and principles. Pollack’s report on day-to-day fascism and racism at the time his father grew up sheds some light onto how the war generations were conditioned and socialised. The individual psychogram of the father, and also the grandparents, mirror the cultural and political psychogram of Austrian and German society at the time.

The text “Der Tote im Bunker” describes less the internal conflict of the author, but the external search for his father and the conflict with the grandparents. It is a very phlegmatic, objective and balanced investigation. Pollack sits between his private anxiety and discomfort, and the need to relay an objective account of his father’s involvement in Nazi crimes. While Pollack searches for his father, he is able to separate and distance himself from him his father’s crimes which sometimes comes across as a little too unconcerned and unemotional.

2.3.5. Summary/Conclusion

Julia Kospach mentioned in her review of Pollack’s text that “it was not Pollack’s agitation as the aggrieved son but the passionate exactness of his investigation into the life and violent death of the father that produced the poignancy of his writing”. (in Kospach) Pollack searches for his father’s motives but doesn’t seem to find them, or at best realises a vague image of a father he hadn’t known. The documents and conversations he has had with the mother or grandparents still give Pollack no answer as to who the father really was, and essentially remains a vague stranger to Martin. (Pollack 121) This vague image of the father seems common for some of the children of Nazi perpetrators who have limited or no memories of their own. For Pollack the generational conflict, especially about the Nazi history of father and grandparents, is battled out with the grandmother as Pollack’s father was dead. Pollack’s depiction of the grandparents and parents, and also of his extended family, shows that Pollack is ashamed of their involvement in WWII and the Holocaust and the subsequent denial of it, or the silence which constitutes a denial. He is on a quest to show which conditions made his father take the path he took. By illuminating the life of his father and his conditioning and socialisation, Pollack hopes to get a better understanding of him. His research is an investigation, almost scientific in nature. The author is not deeply entangled in

the family legacy, but the reader senses emotions such as frustration, doubt and underlying anger and also hope to find evidence that this Nazi father had some humanity or decency. Pollack doesn't seem to feel shame for the father's conduct nor antipathy towards the father. As there is unequivocal evidence to the father's involvement and status as a criminal Nazi, Pollack cannot deny the father's guilt and culpability, however, he suspends making a judgement about the father. Pollack said in 2004 that "judgement is incredibly cheap, and that he is not entitled to judge" ("Unsere arme SS" Kospach 108-109), rather he questions and reflects. One might criticise Pollack as missing the collision between his knowledge and the moral responsibility to condemn this Nazi perpetrator, and that this even-tempered investigation manifests a release from the sins of his father. Compared to Niklas Frank, Pollack does not seem to be haunted by his father's involvement in the demise of German victims, but grants himself a position of objectivity which lacks taking a moral stance against evil.

2.4. Thomas Medicus "In den Augen meines Grossvaters", 2004

2.4.1. Author background

Thomas Medicus was born in Mittelfranken in 1953. He studied German, Political Sciences and Art History in Marburg/Lahn and then became a freelance journalist for FAZ, Deutschlandfunk and Basler Zeitung. He was editor at the Tagesspiegel in Berlin and lecturer at the Hamburger Institut für Sozialforschung where he was fellow in 2001 and 2006. Medicus has been the Goethe-Munk-Writer in Residence at the Munk Centre in Toronto.^x Medicus is known for his text "In den Augen meines Grossvaters" (2004), and more recently

for “Ein deutsches Leben”, a biography on Melitta von Stauffenberg (2012). Today Medicus is a freelance author. He travels regularly to Middle and Eastern Europe and currently resides in either Berlin or Dolgie/Poland.

2.4.2. Perpetrator background

Wilhelm Crisolli was born on 20 January 1895 into an Italian noble family. He was a German General, member of the Nazi Party, and in World War II he commanded many divisions such as Commander of Panzer-Division, Infanterie-Division and Luftwaffen-Sturm-Division. During his impressive career he received many awards and was a highly decorated Generalleutnant (posthumously promoted to this rank) in WWII when he was shot by Italian partisans on 12 September 1944. Crisolli was a recipient of Germany’s highest award, the Knight’s Cross of the Iron Cross, which recognised battlefield bravery and military leadership. He also held the Iron Cross (1914 and 1939), Cross of Honor, Panzer Badge and Eastern Front Medal and Wound Badge.

Crisolli started his career on the front in the Jaeger-Regiment in 1914, and advanced quickly from Fahnenjunker to Fähnrich, and only a year later to Leutnant. He also worked as news officer. After the war he went to join the Reichswehr where in 1925 he became Oberleutnant. Three years later he was Hauptmann and in 1934 he was the leader of an Eskadron in Gera. He also worked briefly as a teacher for tactics in Potsdam. Here he advanced to Major, and in 1938 to Oberstleutnant. In 1939 he led his division to war during the invasion of Poland, and became commander of the 3 Battalion of the Schützenregiment 8 which he commanded into the East. He became Oberst on 1 August 1941. After being injured in 1942 he was transferred

to the reserve corps where he became a commander of the newly established 13th Schützenbrigade, later 13th Panzer-Division. From his infantry positions he moved to the Feld-Division and to the 20th Luftwaffen-Sturm-Division. On 12 September 1944 he was shot by Italian partisans. The chapter detailing Crisolli's army career is headed "Den Krieg leben" (Medicus 50-53), reflecting that war and serving this country seemed to have been Crisolli's calling. Crisolli served Germany for 30 years, and Medicus treats the reader to a description of that life and career as well as a description of the middle class of the Weimar Republic and how Germany moved from WWI to WWII.

2.4.3. Content and style

The text is written from Medicus' perspective. It is divided into three parts with chapters, individual headings and categorisations. In the first part we find out about the authors standpoint, and how he completed his research (travel and interviews, materials used, and documents sighted). Medicus gives a vivid account of his impressions. He is fascinated with the East which evokes images in him of landscapes, lakes, pine trees and the sea. Medicus lets us in on the fact that as a child he was surrounded by many secrets – similar to Schneider's narrator and Pollack. His mother and grandmother never told him anything about "what had happened". (17) The reader discovers that this secret is about Medicus' grandfather, Generalleutnant Wilhelm Crisolli. Medicus has grown up from the child surrounded by secrets to the researcher that will bring out in the open the family's secretive past. His motivation for writing the text was "[...]sich der eigenen Herkunft zu vergewissern, [...]".^{xi}

The description of landscapes are immensely important to Medicus. He is known for his travel accounts and “In den Augen meines Grossvaters” has elements of “Reiseerzählung”. Medicus said that “landscapes are the most inspiring elements for my writing” as the association between landscape and the person, or the event he is writing about, would not be possible without Medicus imagining the landscape. (Hähnel-Mesnard) Landscapes allow for Medicus to travel through time.

On a trip to England, Medicus’ fascination with the poet Rupert Brooke was awakened. Brooke was also a soldier in WWI. His war sonnets are known in England to this day. Medicus is especially fascinated by the blending of fiction and reality while perusing Brooke’s biography. Maybe this influenced Medicus to blend fiction and authenticity in his text. (Hähnel-Mesnard) Medicus uses fiction to reconstruct his family historiography, as he cannot simply base it on facts. Fact and fiction are not opposites but “..., the multiple refractions of perspective determine the narrative approach”. (Brüche und Widersprüche Medicus) The blend of fact and fiction is a literary tool for Medicus, and any accusation of possible relativism should be seen in this context. Literary and aesthetic techniques are used as well as labelling texts (“novel”, “novella”, “report”) to show that in Väterliteratur the fictional and non-fictional elements can exist side by side. Schneider’s text is an example of an exception, his text is not auto-biographical.

Medicus perceives the grandfather's story as the “geheime Fluchtpunkt meiner Biographie, auf den alles zustrebte, was ich je getan oder nicht getan hatte, geworden oder nicht geworden war.” (Medicus 54-55) This is a very important declaration which outlines an

entanglement of the grandson through the grandfather's life, and what this means for his own identity.

Medicus calls his text a "family novel", which gives some indication about his intention to trace his grandfather's and his family's history. In the interview with Hähnel-Mesnard, Medicus states he was most interested in his grandfather, to find out where that grandfather was positioned in the memory of his family, and if that memory influenced any of the family members subconsciously." (Hähnel-Mesnard) He admits that for him the militant grandfather and his "soldierly masculinity" was fascinating and in stark contrast to his own civil education as part of a family that "expected nothing from the war, little from the military, but even more from education, affluence and etiquette". This grandfather was not a high-ranking Nazi and his fascination for war and militarism seem to have posited him in an outsider position in the family. His militarism seemed to be in opposition to a family who saw themselves as civilised, educated and well-adjusted into society. However, nowhere is the grandfather depicted as barbaric or sadistic. The portrayal of the grandfather reminds us of a soldier fighting for his country, doing duty for his country almost in the fashion of sentimental romanticism.

Medicus' "most important witnesses" were 51 black and white photographs. (Medicus 55) They told the story of Crisolli's last few months and death. Half of the photographs showed Crisolli's funeral under the flag of the Third Reich, depicting soldiers saluting "Heil Hitler" and a wreath which showed the Fuehrer's last greeting to Crisolli. Disgusted, Medicus had always put the photos away for that reason. At the beginning of his research he knew only a few details about his grandfather. However, he also finds a photograph that showed the lonely

grave of his grandfather in a desolate landscape, and the uncertainty about the grandfather evoked pity in Medicus. (58) We sense a shift has taken place from the grandson who had seen a grandfather figure associated with Hitler's regime, to a grandson that is questioning what kind of life the person buried there had lived, and that there might be more to the grandfather than him being a Nazi soldier. The emphasis at the beginning of the research is on debating, questioning and reasoning, in sharp contrast to passing judgement or condemnation. This author is able to understand his grandfather from a different perspective, and he tries to comprehend the conditions and constraints in which the grandfather did what he did. This could be construed as playing down the grandfather's culpability. However, given Medicus' profession it seems plausible that he is objectively investigating instead of practising denial. Here is also an indication in the word "redemption". (183) We will not find hatred or rage, but pity and clemency for this grandfather. This pity does not feel condescending, but attests to Medicus being able to put himself into the position of his grandfather. It was important to Medicus to seek understanding for the grandfather without forgiving him for what he had done.

2.4.4. The grandfather perpetrator and the grandson

After sorting the photographs, Medicus traces backwards the grandfather's history – from the last seven months of his grandfather's life as he gave his last service for Germany; the photos were taken at the end of May 1944 in Italy near La Spezia or Carrara. Nine of the other photos portray Crisolli's time in Denmark. Medicus seems a little in awe: "Der Glanz seiner Gegenwart ist so ueberwaeltigend, dass er im Guten wie im Boesen niemanden gleichgueltig laesst." (61)

Medicus discovers in the photographs the men's "narcissism" (62), and the "alt-preussische Militärtradition" (62-63) He finds the perfect photo to remember the grandfather by, and a document in which the grandfather spoke of his "longing for war, a desire for it".(69)

Medicus can comprehend this.

When Medicus travels to Italy at various times, his grandfathers "Schicksalsorte" become his own. (71) Medicus cannot judge the grandfather as he never really finds out what the grandfather actually has done. It seems more a case of sensing the grandfather's involvement as he was part of the Nazi Einsatzkommandos in the East. During his research Medicus reflects on his anxiousness as if he expects to find something terrible. When he arrives in Sant' Anna, where in 1944 nearly 600 people were killed under Walter Reder (SS), Medicus does not let on that he is German as "*i tedeschi* in dieser Gegend nicht gern gesehen werden." (90) This is an indication Medicus does not feel comfortable in his German skin due to the knowledge of what Germans had done in the area.

On visits to Italy Medicus "meets" the partisans for the first time. There is a memorial in the Portikus to partisan warfare and their titanic struggle. The Italian partisans who killed Crisolli were part of the Italian resistance movement (Resistenza) formed by pro-Allied Italians in WWII.

Italian partisans came from many political splinter groups such as communist and socialist, but also monarchists, Catholic sympathisers and anarchists. Goals were not always united with inter-group fighting, mainly due to pecking order issues and accusations of siding with the enemy. The largest of the contingents operated in the Alps and Apennines. Unit sizes

varied, the largest being over 450 men and women, but the most common size was approximately five members due to the practicalities and difficulties of arming, feeding, clothing and securing the unit from enemy attacks. Weaponry mainly included stolen rifles, pistols, revolvers, machine guns and hand grenades.

The most famous partisan government was in Ossola, but by the end of 1944 Hitler and Mussolini had crushed most of the partisan movement, as they understood that not all Italians supported the Fascist regimes. (in Cooke)

An old lady tells Medicus that the “Commandante Crisoldi was not bad” (*her version of the name*, my comment) and that all in Nocchi were “”sad to see him go”. (Medicus 95)

However, she tells him of the execution of men and women brought to a German jail as suspected partisans. The order for the execution was given by Crisolli. Medicus wonders if the killing of his grandfather at Olivacci could have been retaliation for the execution.

Medicus never finds out the exact circumstances surrounding the grandfather’s demise. He knows he was travelling in an open Mercedes through an area he must have known to be occupied by partisans. Medicus is told several different versions of events but none can be verified. He feels he is stuck in a web of “rumours, half-truths and legends” that provide him, at best, with highly varied versions of the events. (103)

He is told by a witness that there had been rumours that his grandfather, after being mortally wounded, had pleaded not to retaliate. Medicus is confused and does not know what to believe. He wants to believe that his grandfather might have given this order, but he sees it in

complete opposition to what he would expect from a General-Major of the German Army who wrote in his diary on 13 September that the “cleansing action of the area was in full swing”. (104)

Medicus – while he does not hide it - hardly touches on the fact that his grandfather’s mission in Italy had been the “abatement of partisans” (which as a general rule meant an intense phase of actions against civilians including extreme violence, killings and executions), but rather describes landscapes and gardens, and talks of his grandfather playing Bridge or having coffee in the garden from a coffeepot with cute motifs – which to some readers and critics could be seen as naïve or even offensive in its innocuousness. It seems impossible to combine the different images of the grandfather.

The question why his grandfather would have travelled through an area riddled with partisans in an open car which would give him no protection, is pondered upon by Medicus as a certain kind of fatalism or indifference for his own life or that of others. (107) This can however only be an assumption as no records have been found. Medicus’ foremost desire is to understand the grandfather’s decisions, attitude and thought patterns, and to portray scenes of what he assumes could have happened.

Medicus also informs us on other family members. He tells us that he had posters of Che Guevara on his walls when he was 15. Medicus states his father was his happiest at the end of the 1960s, fancying the Anti-Springer-campaign and criticising the manipulation of the country’s opinion by the “Bild”-Zeitung. (112) We hear about his grandfather and

grandmother, anecdotes and facts about their parents and their child Heidemarie, Medicus' mother. These passages are based on facts enriched by fiction. The family novel can here be seen as a literary presentation of his family's historiography embedded in the history of the eras of WWI and WWII, and post-war. Medicus purposely mixes fact and fiction and stands in contrast to many authors of Väterliteratur who traditionally - and perhaps feeling morally obliged to adhere to complete authenticity - shy away from narrativising facts. What seems a taboo for many authors and critics of Väterliteratur seems to be the essence of Medicus' literary style.

Medicus describes how the grandfather and his 20th Luftwaffen-Felddivision arrive in Italy in July 1944 with the Allies at their heels. In this chapter the clemency towards his grandfather seems the greatest. The heat, his kidney disease, general exhaustion and anxiety were Crisolli's enemies as much as the planes and tanks of the Americans. His division was tired of the war. Medicus mentions that his grandfather, as their leader, had to uphold a cheerful example, and even provide entertainment. (188) The Allies called for the partisans to rise up against the German occupants. For Crisolli the order for the "abatement of the partisans" came on 11 July. His division was encouraged to display their own initiatives and they had the security that they would not be punished for "taking drastic measures". Medicus states that his grandfather's involvement in the "Bandenbekämpfung" was mainly of "bureaucratic nature" which seems to make him, at best, a "desk murderer" to the grandson. He was responsible for interrogations and the deportations of prisoners and partisans to labour camps or concentration camps in Germany. But Medicus knows that "Bandenbekämpfung" was not only of bureaucratic nature. Raffaele Mazzucchi, a 25 year old priest, 46 year old Gilda Nardini and her 17 year old daughter Margherita had been sentenced to death by his grandfather for "Begünstigung von Banditen" and "versuchter Verleitung deutscher Soldaten

zur Fahnenflucht" (192) and were executed on 27 July. According to Medicus his grandfather could have attempted to have the partisans pardoned but he did not. (193) Medicus reflects: "Fuer einen staatstreuen Protestanten wie den Generalmajor war ein katholischer Volksheld wie der widerstaengige Padre, [...], das Fremde schlechthin. [...] Auf die Frage, wer sein Feind sei, entschied Wilhelm Crisolli, dass diese drei es seien, die fuer ihn das Magisch-Gefaehrliche des Suedens personifizieren. Militaerisch wertlos, war ihr Tod die reine Vergeltung. Der Priester und die beiden Frauen waren langgehegte innere Feinde in äusserer Gestalt." To Medicus the execution is evidence that his grandfather acted this way to "subdue his inner partisan" and as he had been conditioned to an aversion and antipathy to "The Other". (195)

Crisolli is said to have let two people get away unpunished (one for cutting a cable and one for smuggling tobacco). (197) This chapter, with the comparison of the two different reactions of his grandfather seems to be the climax of Medicus' examination of the grandfather's guilt. The fact that his grandfather threatened the landlady with executing her son-in-law should she not tell him where her own son is, is mentioned only casually. (200-201) It seems that Medicus struggles immensely with coming to terms with the persona that he finds in his research due to the fact that there are no records as tangible proof.

On 9 September 1944 Crisolli is assassinated, and with the arrival of his grandfather's personal belongings, the story of the General and Italy "sank into the mist of the familial memory". (208)

Medicus finds no wall of silence when he visits his mother's cousin, Gräfin Johanna. She had a lively memory of the grandfather, while his mother seemed to have "lost her memory".

(209) He learns his grandfather was "Zackig, kurz, knapp, direct, ein preussischer Offizier, einer, der sich den Mund nicht verbieten laesst." (213) A man of humour as well - he apparently had replied to a young man that told him he was joining the SS: "Na, da sind Sie ja jetzt schon verloren."

Johanna also speaks of the grandfather's "Kaltstellung" following his grandfather's refusal of an order of Hitler's to have the men fight "until the end in the summer of 1942 or 1943 in Russia. "Kaltstellung" for Crisolli meant he was sent home, not allowed to wear his uniform and a guard was stationed at his house. This went on for weeks. Johanna states that Crisolli had a deep antipathy towards the Nazis: "Den Nazis, das konnte man nicht allein dieser Situation, sondern seinem ganzen Verhalten entnehmen, hat er mit einer ganz tiefen, inneren Ablehnung gegenuebergestanden." (214) But Medicus mistrusts these revelations. In his own investigations he states "fand ich nichts, was auf eine >>Befehlsverweigerung<< hindeutete" (226) This indicates that Medicus is open to the fact that there can be a certain inconsistency and ambivalence that can be created by eye-witnesses accounts, especially those of relatives. But he only knows for certain the grandfather was not just an innocent bystander. He is in search of all the evidence, but not all pieces of the puzzle could be found.

Medicus is certain that nobody could be closer to Crisolli than himself. (235) This is especially so, as other members of the family decided not to find out what Crisolli had actually done. He goes on an imaginary journey with his grandfather where some of the empirical facts were non-existent and he had to literally resort to imagination. In much of the

text, a fictional dialogue, is a dominant feature. In his interview with Carol Hähnel-Mesnard he said it was important to put himself in the perpetrator's shoes and that it was not morally questionable, but many a writer's "daily bread" to think themselves into evil people. (Hähnel-Mesnard) The question of authenticity remains difficult for Medicus, but he is aware that events could have been different. He knows that he cannot prove misunderstandings with material from the family archives nor with statements from the family. But he feels most of his assumptions are plausible when casting a look back at the era in which his grandfather lived. He also feels happy with fragments of his grandfather's life which really only included his last few months, and Medicus tried to contextualise these fragments. This is where Medicus' work becomes "memory writing", he embeds the facts and figures into an "open form" in which "Widersprüchlichkeit, Vielsichtigkeit, aber auch Zufälligkeit der Ereignisse gerecht werden."

2.4.5. Summary/Conclusion

At the conclusion of the text Medicus writes that he did not want to be prosecutor, defender or judge. However, he knows to be biased. „[...] Dennoch war ich es immer wieder, sein Ankläger, sein Verteidiger, sein Richter. Wie immer ich mich verhielt, ich handelte als Befangener. Die einzige Rolle, die ich mir zutraute, war die des Ermittlers, des Ermittlers in fremder wie zugleich eigener Sache.“ (Medicus 237) Medicus only allows himself to be an investigator. It will depend on what he finds, but it is certain that Medicus was interested in finding the truth – no matter what it was. What he finds is already a difficult balancing act for Medicus. In his eyes he will always try and understand, but never forgive. Medicus feels a degree of empathy for his grandfather that is inherent in trying to understand a perpetrator. He concludes that there is nothing that could have absolved his grandfather from the guilt

with regards to the execution of the priest and the two women. Medicus settles for a place confirmed by German history and Germany's post-war memory politics. He is aware of the enticement of denial or defending this perpetrator, and of the difficulties that children and grandchildren of Nazi perpetrators face. Medicus has an awareness of Germans as perpetrators as well as Germans as victims, and recognises for his grandfather a close connection or even intertwining of the two sides: "Wilhelm Crisollis Schicksal besass jedoch seine eigenen Tücken, Täterschaft und Opferschicksal waren in seinem Fall derart dicht miteinander verwoben, dass sich fuer seine Familie nicht ohne weiteres Orientierung ergab und sich vielleicht auch nicht ergeben koennen. (243)

While Medicus could be criticised for never really making a moral judgement, this has to be seen in the context of Medicus' search for what his grandfather's life story and career ultimately meant to the members of his family after WWII. The imaginary monologues of his grandfather, and the imagined dialogues with him, feel constructed due to lack of evidence, and at best depict what might have been, especially as Medicus continuously combines elements of uncertainty. The difficult task for Medicus can be seen in finding a balance between the evidence presented to him by the photographs, witness statements and other documentation. For him it is like a room in which there are many voices (facts, fiction, legends, myths and rumours), and his main worry was to find a balance between what was probable and what wasn't. (245)

Medicus feels as representative of the third generation that he follows a different discourse of the past and has reached a different stage of reflection and that the guilt discourse of the old BRD has become obsolete with its "remorse, atonement and consternation". (245) This is

also the reason much of his text describes his search as that of experiencing a “mist” or “fog”, and often seems looking at “unscharfe Bilder” as Ulla Hahn has described it. (in Hahn)

These “unscharfe Bilder” and the fog or mist created by time lapse, disappearance of witnesses, lack of authentic material as well as the lies and silences of families seem natural, persistent and recurrent in post-war Germany. Medicus feels there is a new way of looking at the German past, and especially for his generation it seems possible to leave repentance and atonement behind, though entanglement still exists.

Medicus concludes that there was no point in mirroring himself day in and day out in the eyes of his grandfather. He feels the need to remember as much as the need to forget (Medicus 248), and Medicus feels that the ethicisation of memory is as nonsensical, as the ethicisation of forgetting. (Hähnel-Mesnard)

Most importantly Medicus states that without forgetting, we are not able to act, hence not in a position to reconcile. This seems Medicus’ most important inference. For Medicus, it is important to understand his grandfather’s and his family’s history, as well as Germany’s history, and he hopes others can, too.

Medicus is settled in a discourse that has accepted, to a certain extent, the nuances of German history of divergent memories and fates as an integral part of coming to terms with the German past. Being a third-generation author, Medicus is situated in a discourse of writers within the wider transformation in perception, and representation of guilt and culpability. His grandfather’s narrative is integrated in the greater narrative of German perpetration.

The fact that this writer is investigating a grandfather instead of a father is also an important circumstance in terms of an even closer relationship had it been the father. In the interview however, Medicus concludes that it was emotionally difficult to understand without bringing a change and at the same time not forgive. We must also remember that in Crisolli, Medicus did not find a monster or a murderous Nazi such as Mengele or Frank. He also never knew his grandfather.

Medicus finds criticism that his text was “Rechtfertigungsliteratur” or “beschönigende Biographie der Vorfahren” defamatory. His text has to be seen as a tracing of his grandfather’s life which is a literary representation in the form of a family novel that uses multiple perspectives to trace Crisolli, but the main focus being “die transgenerationellen Auswirkungen des Nationalsozialismus in einer deutschen Nachkriegsfamilie, also eine für meine Generation nicht untypische Strategie der Selbstaufklärung.” This “self-enlightenment” has to be seen as the dominant Leitmotiv in Medicus’ narrative.

3 Comparison

The four texts discussed can be seen as the embodiment of a new style of literature that evolved from the more political to a more personal and individual type of literature two decades after World War II. The texts are influenced by, and draw inspiration from, a multitude of literary genres, and are examples of memory literature starting in the 1970s, turning inwardly under the literary genre of “Neue Subjektivität”.

The texts examined here remain similar in their narrative styles. Apart from “Vati”, the texts are explicitly factual and auto-biographical. Väterliteratur centres on the role of fictional and real perpetrators in the familial arena with varying degrees of guilt and responsibility. The texts follow the tendency of political and cultural discourse of the post-war years in which the 1970’s, and also the reunification years of the late 1980’s, can be seen as stimuli in exploring with a certain curiosity the participation of family members in WWII and the Holocaust. The texts do not focus on the victims of these perpetrators, though they are mentioned peripherally.

Despite some parallels, the texts differ in classification and in stylistic terms. The text of Frank is an imaginary dialogue, and Medicus also sometimes falls into an imaginary dialogue with his grandfather. Schneider’s narrator writes a long letter to his friend, while Pollack’s text is an investigation and almost forensic in nature due to the fact that he really does not have much evidence, and therefore facts and figures are grasped as the main evidence to support his findings. They take elements from genres such as historical novel, family novel, narrative fiction, Bildungsroman, Reiseroman and memory writing.

All of the texts discussed here are written from the I-perspective – either that of a narrator, or the author who retrospectively reconstruct the relatives’ past from their own present.

The writings complement various stages of Germany’s “coming to terms with the past” in the context of Erinnerungskultur, and all provide historical facts and figures whilst also portraying the generational conflicts at different stages in Germany and Austria. They reflect

a change in the memory climate in both countries, which also includes issues such as integrating German victim perspectives, but more importantly a tendency to illuminate how these family perpetrator narratives shaped the author's lives. Some authors do not refer to the memory culture in their present Germany at all, while others such as Frank are very critical about the degree and extent of Vergangenheitsbewältigung in Germany at various stages.

The texts discussed here show that these children and grandchildren of Nazi perpetrators are on a quest to find out what motivated their fathers/grandfathers to join the Nazi regime, and how this influenced their own lives. This includes their family's historiographies. These writers confront their own heritage by illuminating and coming to terms with their families' pasts which are part of their countries pasts. In the texts of Väterliteratur, the major issue is the Nazi past of the father/grandfather but other existential issues such as death, sexuality and feminism, illness, suicide and dying, childhood and other issues were also articulated and have to be seen as integral to the identity search of these writers. It was particularly important for their writing to be "real": "Authentisch sein und schreiben implizierte so die Einforderung von Subjektivität". (Mauelshagen 92) While these works are individual and subjective, they also tend to fulfil a need to depict the historical and ideological conditions prevalent during the perpetrators' lives, which often provide the hard-fact evidence that supports the individual and subjective stance. Those more entangled with the past seem to consider having inherited guilt and trauma, while those less entangled do not seem fearful of an inheritance of evil, but seem more fearful that trying to understand could constitute forgiveness. All try, more or less, to disprove the webs of lies, deceptions and evasions that might have been spun by close family members to conceal family history, or simply write against the wall of silence that was in place in many areas of society. The experience of guilt is different for each of them, but all seem to want to confront it.

As the German history of WWII and the Holocaust retreats further and further into the past, during the last few decades there have been numerous views on how to commemorate and keep that past alive, and how to form a German and human identity, despite such a past. I have highlighted that patterns and strategies of the engagement with German history have changed, especially in the literary arena from the post-war years to the present. All these texts render the private experiences of their relatives and themselves accessible to public scrutiny and reflection, and with that the authors find themselves in positions of vulnerability.

There is no rigid line between these texts in terms of genre, and many of the subject matters are carried forward. The personal and subjective manner in which these texts were created came from many different places, but no matter how these authors/narrators attempted to bear witness, they were leaving open for all to see their own personal and perhaps spiritual essence. We know the sins of the fathers and grandfathers are still immensely current in the lives of their descendants. An example – not from literature – is depicted in “Hitler’s children”, a 2012 BBC documentary in which Bettina Goering and her brother revealed they had themselves sterilized so they would “never produce another Goering” again.^{xii} The themes of Väterliteratur highlight and mirror the interest in Nazi perpetrators by including a whole range of perpetrators, from real Nazi monsters to the ordinary men, and the need to examine all perpetrator types.

I would also like to give a short summary of the perpetrator profiles we find in the texts discussed here. Schneider's and Frank's perpetrators are similar as they are ideological

fanatics that certainly knew about justice and murder and their own involvement in it.

Gerhard Bast also fits into this category. They were certainly not automatons that executed the genocide of European Jewry. They were men of conviction, high-ranking Nazis, who had no empathy for their victims and only a desire to enhance their own lives and careers, and polish their egos. We must assume that these perpetrators had an extremist nature. We know that Schneider's perpetrator maintained his political beliefs grounded in Darwinistic and racist ideology, and who showed no remorse. He has to be classed as somewhat psychopathic with his experiments on human beings even though – and this is one of the differences of this text – the narrator in “Vati” actually never relays what the father's actual role was. He is said to have participated in a “German crime” and that he was the “meistgesuchte Verbrecher der Welt”. (Schneider 29) Frank also had no remorse, as his son established through historical documents, even though he pretended to have found faith in prison. Frank was a rabid anti-Semite that joined the Nazis out of deep founded beliefs in their ideology. He was an opportunist, a careerist and an utterly convinced Nazi who saw himself as a Herrenmensch. He is described as someone completely devoid of principles as well as deluded.

In Bast we find a perpetrator who came from a family background that was intensely anti-social and anti-Semite. He self-selected to join the SS and as such possessed pre-disposing patterns that made him perfect for the role he chose. He was already a member of the party while it was still illegal. We can assume that he was prejudiced from childhood and indoctrinated by hatred of the “Other”. He also came from an area in which anti-Semitism and racial hatred was normal and fostered to the extreme by his grandparents. Interestingly, we hear from Pollack about his self-reflection as a teenager on learning tolerance of others and his rebellion against the grandmother.

In Crisolli we find a perpetrator that was accustomed to war and serving his country.

Nothing mattered more to him than German military glory. He was not said to have believed in Nazi ideology or have been anti-Semite. His cousin even said he had an aversion to the Nazis. But it is certain he had blood on his hands. He would have been extremely obedient, and saw it as his duty to defend his country. His attitude would have been an attitude of complete allegiance and devotion.

For all perpetrators it can be said that they had strong respect for authority and a strong inclination to obedience. They were brought up in eras where anti-Semitism was widespread and deeply embedded in their respective countries and societies, hence the authoritarian structures and socialisation processes, and the indoctrination in the hatred of enemies provided the conditions for these Nazis to flourish. It cannot be said Crisolli came from a core Nazi background but the others certainly did. As part of the SS they received special training – they were trained to obey, and to inflict violence and brutality. The SS demanded complete subordination. High ranking Nazis were a racially pure elite with common values and practices, shared mystique, a devotion to the organisation and ideology, they had undergone extensive and substantial re-socialisation where moral values had been thrown overboard.

Frank and Schneider's perpetrator fit the categorisation of sadistic and perhaps psychopathic, and these two seem to lack moral capacity. All seemed to have acted as individuals that were actors in a system that allowed and encouraged their actions. They were mostly focused on

tasks and technical problems, though the devaluation and demonization of the “Other” was natural to them and seemed part of their personality. Due to their ranks they were in an agentic mode where it was easy to relinquish individual responsibility and act as agents of an authoritarian regime. The compartmentalisation of functions and their bureaucratisation provided a perfect screen to hide behind.

We can say that the authors of Väterliteratur all followed the guidelines of New Subjectivity in terms of the examination of their personal experiences. We find many integrations of the author or narrator reflections seeking to evoke an emotional response. Pollack admits to having problems with sharing emotions, whereas Frank lets them all out freely and almost succumbs to cliché at various points in the narrative. Medicus seems emotionally detached in his journalistic search from his grandfather but never-the-less stated that what he found was emotionally challenging. Schneider is not talking about a real father, but puts his narrator into the shoes of Mengele’s son Rolf. As a difference can be seen that only really Schneider’s narrator makes any comment about “inheriting” guilt and trauma from the father’s generation. He seems haunted by a latent feeling of guilt or complicity, though I suggest a real examination of guilt does not happen or at the most only on the surface. Schneider’s perpetrator feels constructed the most, and the narrator comes across as someone who says what others want to hear. Apart from Schneider, all of the authors integrated primary-source materials such as letters, photographs, journals and other documents, as well as witness statements and archived files available to the public. Historical information in their research outweighs personal experiences with the relative (some memories are relayed by family members). Pollack and Frank have limited memories of the father themselves from their childhood, but they are vague and no real point of reference. All find evidence of the relatives’ atrocities and are able to reflect on the moral implications of the perpetrators’

positions. Schneider used the interview of Rolf Mengele from the Bunte series. The texts of Väterliteratur must be seen as hybrid forms of literary genre due to the fact that they use elements of traditional biography and auto-biography, as well as elements of realist family novels, Bildungsroman, documentary and historical fiction. They seek to form a family record though some, particularly Pollack and Medicus, seem to be unable to position their relatives in a model of absolute certainty regarding their status as perpetrator, as many questions stay unanswered. While Schneider's text is fictional, it leans closely on the Bunte series of interviews with Rolf Mengele. Pollack, Frank and Medicus attempt to remain as authentic as possible. The claim to authenticity seems to be especially important when literary works describe German history, as it seems important for the authors to relay their findings free of fiction. Medicus is an example of an author who felt comfortable to mix fact and fiction. Pollack, Medicus and Frank continuously construct and re-construct their relatives, but the narrative perspective of the texts is positioned as authentic and authoritative.

As for the authors/narrators and the sons/grandson – fictional or not – we can say they all face the fathers'/grandfather's involvement in WWII and the Holocaust, and for each one of the authors, writing seems to also be an act of mourning. It would be easy to avoid the issues and claim the "Gnade der späten Geburt" but these authors/narrators do not suppress or bury their entanglement. Emotionally and intellectually they deal with the family's history. We must see these texts in the context of familial memory which changed from an inability to mourn, as the Mitscherlichs' described, or even an unwillingness to accept familial entanglements, to examinations of perpetrators who for many of the Nachgeborenen are still vague and shapeless but who are no longer denied agentic roles in the Nazi regime, and as such are seen as influencing these writers' lives immensely. Welzer argues that the "innerfamiliales Erinnerungsvermögen prinzipiell die unscharfen Bilder der Rollen und

Handlungen von Familienangehörigen in Zeiten des Toetens vorzieht. Es sind die konturlosen, vagen, eben unscharfen Bilder, die in Gestalt widerspruechlicher, nebuloeser, fragmentierter Geschichten im Familiengedaechtnis niedergelegt sind.” (“*Schön unscharf*“ Welzer 56) The authors’ of the Väterliteratur discussed here are honest in their examination of the family perpetrators, though Pollack and Medicus feel enough uncertainty or ambiguity to prevent them from forming a completely solid opinion about their relatives, as they find many gaps in their search for evidence which makes any real verdict or stance against the father/grandfather more challenging. Though they know they were involved in atrocities of the German regime, the stance seems more empathetic with a willingness to understand and a refusal to judge. This also shows the continuum of the thematisation of guilt, and the distance in time to the events of WWII and the Holocaust enables the authors such as Pollack and Medicus to show a certain lenience which should not be equated to forgiveness. These authors also do not trivialise the facts they find. Readers might feel that there can only be one opinion or another when it comes to these perpetrators, but for family members there naturally seems a schism they find hard to bridge when they are talking about their father or grandfather.

While Pollack could be seen as being too hesitant in his final conclusions, and Schneider’s narrator is someone who failed his quest to free himself from the father, Frank is at the opposite end of the spectrum with his total condemnation of his father. He even pipes up as an imaginary prosecutor at his father’s trial. Frank is the most merciless when it comes to his father’s guilt, he will not accept anything less than total liability. He also delivers a scathing criticism of Germany as a nation, which in my opinion is not entirely justified in terms of the numerous honest, genuine and ongoing attempts of German Vergangenheitsbewältigung to date. Niklas Frank is the only author who cautions that all of us need to feel shame while

facing the atrocities committed during the war by our forefathers. Only by doing so will we be able to move forward, and with self-reflection and courage we shall be able to act morally and heed the warning signs so that German history will never repeat itself.

“When all men think alike, no one thinks very much.”

Walter Lippmann

“Und eine Sorge bleibt in mir,

Zu hoeren, was Dunkel der Nacht noch birgt.

Die viel Blut vergossen, entgehen

Dem Blick der Goetter nicht. Und prasst,

Ein Unwuerdiger lang im Glueck,

Die schwarzen Erinyen wenden sein Los.”

Aischylos, Die Orestie - Agamemnon

4 Jonathan Littell’s “Les Bienveillantes”

In 2010 Erin McGlothlin wrote: “Little extensive analysis has been written addressing the questions of the advisability and possibility of depicting the Holocaust perpetrator, [...], how existing representations of perpetrators function [...]. In particular, in contrast to the literary treatment and critical analysis of the voice of the victims,[...], the perspective of the perpetrators – in particular, the *narrative* perspective of the perpetrators, meaning their

subjectivity, motivations, thoughts, and desires – has been all but ignored.” (“Theorizing the Perpetrator” McGlothlin 210-230)

It seems at the beginning of the 21st century, the sense of literary and cultural unease which surrounds attempts to conceptualise and depict Holocaust perpetrators remains. We seem to have reached our limits in explaining why genocides occur even though we have so many evidenced cases and have looked for answers since decades. In order to find explanations we seem to have come so far as to have accepted that no one single aspect can help us understand what turns nations of people into mass murderers.

Much of what we know about perpetrators relied on the testimonies given at post-war trials, and years of research have established they were not philistines or simple followers nor motiveless bureaucrats, technocrats or automatons. They were not unsophisticated nor uneducated as many belonged to the educated elite, nor banal in the Arendtian sense. We can also not call the perpetrators of the Holocaust a group of radicals only acting a certain way because exceptional circumstances forced them to act that way, though this was certainly the case for some. Diabolization and alienation of a selected few would pardon the rest of German society as well as their allies and other collaborators. The perpetrators in Germany and Austria came from all social backgrounds, all levels of education, all age groups and all religious denominations. Perpetrators cannot simply be classed as hard core, followers and bystanders. They came from areas such as euthanasia programmes, bureaucratic desk-murderers, war and extermination criminals of the Einsatzgruppen and in camps, and a society of people who accepted the regime's measures of denunciation, expulsion and eventually extermination. It is those people Harald Welzer, a German sociologist and

psychologist, examined for years in order to work out how ordinary human beings turn into mass murderers.⁴

⁴ Interview with Harald Welzer by Andreas Molitor, “Und beim nächsten Mal ist es schon viel einfacher”, Berliner Zeitung, 10 Sep 2005: To Welzer the Holocaust was an organised process and executed in a moral world of National Socialism. To achieve this, the Nazis got the populus used to new morals by introducing policies that step by step turned Jews into “Untermenschen” while at the same time lifting Germans up to the category of “Herrenmensch”. This Welzer calls psychosocial gratification. It started with demonization of the “Other”, social exclusion and marginalisation, expropriation, expulsion and deportation, persecution and prosecution, and finally extermination. These steps happened over years starting with humiliations, boycotts and assaults from the Nazis coming to power in the early 30’s. Many Germans did not reflect on whether this was right or wrong as it was what the Fuehrer wanted. “Judenpolitik” was communicated to the Volk over years, not always openly, but to saturate every layer of German society. The killing of Jews was a social, normal and dynamically growing process, not done by beasts or insane people but human beings “die sich aus fuer sie plausiblen Gruenden entschieden haben zu toeten”. Welzer says this was not automatic but based on human beings making conscious decisions. Changes happen in the arrangements for the killings which become standardised and optimised, and in the end were not seen as anything remarkable in themselves anymore. We see this with progression of the radicalisation when we examine different ways of killing victims from shooting people at the ravines, introduction to maximise capacities, such as “Sardinentechnik”, then another step of improvements such as gas trucks and in the end concentration camps. He calls this a continuous process of improvement. The enforcement became more and more professionalised. Comradeship and peer pressure were also motives in the genocide. Welzer sees in this process something frighteningly close to “our normal ways to act” and many Germans simply integrated mass murder into their existence. Welzer shows that perpetrators had agency and were not pre-determined to kill. As for Germans being particularly racist or anti-semitic, it seems ordinary Germans practiced a whole range of prejudices just like nationals of other countries. They a blind eye or preoccupied themselves with their own survival, or the survival of loved ones at the front, and felt indifferent about the fate of Jews or Slavs – they seem to be all in all normal human moral weaknesses – not German traits but human traits. Kershaws claim that “The way to Auschwitz was paved by indifference” seems to highlight this German attitude of the time well.

Today we have to work within the frameworks of contextualization and complexity of the Holocaust. Decades ago we had debates between functionalists versus intentionalists.⁵ Both sides of these research areas made significant findings but saw them mutually exclusive. I believe the findings on either side give valuable insight into perpetrator research and need to be seen as standing side by side. The debates go on, and so they need to. But it seems debates on disposition and situation, on common traits of perpetrators, core or peripheral perpetrators, ideology versus utilitarian theory have not brought us further in our understanding of perpetrators. Many of the explanations seem to be one-dimensional and do not suffice on their own. Both Welzer and Littell establish a position from which they view the Holocaust as a process. The theories of intentionalists and structuralists do not seem to work in isolation from each other, or at the most highlight different aspects of the theories behind perpetrators and history. Putting them together as steps or parts of a process they certainly add to our understanding of the processes involved in the genocide of millions of victims, and add to our understanding of perpetrators.

Seemingly sensitisation to the perspective of the victims was the preferred method for Germans to come to terms with their past, and to distance themselves from the perpetrators. The perspective of a perpetrator is far more onerous. We have to be inspired at least by Littell's attempt to shift the perspective back to perpetrators. Different kinds of perpetrators

⁵ Historians have long searched for answers why Hitler committed the genocide of European Jewry. There is a debate between two sides: on one hand we have an 'intentionalist' explanation, which focuses largely on the idea of Hitler specifically intending to commit genocide due to his racial beliefs, naming him as the most significant figure, and the other side of the 'functionalist' position, which believes the Holocaust was the result of a chaotic political and economical circumstances.

demonstrated dramatically different self-concepts. Together with the macro phenomenon and structural-political factors, the personal-psychological factors are important aspects of what turns people into mass murderers. Littell showed in his novel evidence of the Holocaust being committed by a whole array of different perpetrators. All these perpetrators were part of the processes that Littell showed were interconnecting the structural, technical and technological, and ideological policies of the Nazis, and the enormous task Hitler had set for the German nation. Littell's approach was to fill the gaps he felt remained with regards to an understanding of the Holocaust perpetrators' motives and motivations. (Marginalien 39)

4.1. Author background

Not many people had heard of Jonathan Littell before he published his novel "Les Bienveillantes" ("The Kindly Ones" in English, "Les Bienveillantes" in German) in 2006. Littell is francophone, his novel "The Kindly Ones" appeared in French in the original, perhaps as the French language rendered best the personal of his half French, half German narrator.

Littell was born in New York in 1967. Littell's grandparents, on his father's side, were Jews who emigrated from Russia to the United States at the end of the 19th century. Littell obtained French citizenship (while being able to keep the American one) in March 2007 after French officials made use of a clause stating that any French speaker whose "meritorious actions contribute to the glory of France" are allowed to become citizens, despite not fulfilling the requirement that he live in France for more than six months out of the year. Littell's two previous attempts at gaining French citizenship had been denied.

Littell lived for part of his childhood in France completing part of his education there. He returned to the US again to attend Yale University and graduated with a bachelor's degree in 1989. "The Kindly Ones" is often called his first novel but Littell had published a much lesser known text a few years earlier ("Bad Voltage", a science-fiction novel published in English). William S Burroughs was a great influence on Littell and his reading list, introducing him to not only his own writings but that of Sade, Genet, Celine, Bataille and Blanchot. Littell worked as a translator of texts by Sade, Blanchot and Quignard.

Between 1994 and 2001 Littell worked as a humanitarian aid worker for the humanitarian agency "Action contre la Faim" (Action against Hunger) which took him into countries such as Bosnia, Chechnya, Afghanistan, the Caucasus, Moscow, Sierra Leone and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It was in these places he witnessed war and genocide to varying degrees, and the idea for a novel about war and genocide did not leave Littell after these experiences.

Littell was injured in an ambush in Chechnya in January 2001, and in the same year, perhaps as a result of this incident, he decided to quit his job. This is the year he started the in-depth research for his novel which had been on his mind some time. He continued to work as a consultant for humanitarian organisations. Littell lives in Spain with his Belgian wife and his two children.

I would also like to summarise Littell's view on the Holocaust and the Nazi regime. In this summary I will only quote from his interview with Pierre Nora. The references can be found in Littell, "Die Wohlgesinnten – Marginalienband". I will state the page numbers in brackets to simplify.

Littell stated that due to his work in the humanitarian arena in war torn zones such as Rwanda, Bosnia and Afghanistan he had come to see the world through war. (25) Here he found that culture and barbarity live close to each other, in a certain kind of ambiguity, and this is where his interest in the motivations of perpetrators comes from. (26) Claude Lanzmann's "Shoah" was the catalyst for writing "The Kindly Ones". This was the framework he had been looking for as it introduced him to the "bureaucratic aspects of genocide" (28-29) He soon found that behind the scenes diplomatic, administrative and political forces are at work collectively". (29)

Littell sees that there will not be "the truth" but "a truth" in finding the answers we are seeking regarding genocide. (32) Littell wanted to do this by investigating if truth could be found in literature. (32) He was aware of the difficulty to accept the theme of the Holocaust in a fictional arena. (33)

Littell does not agree with Daniel Goldhagen who he felt saw "Antisemitismus als grundlegende und einzige Triebkraft der Ausrottung". (38) Littell based his text on the documents that are available about the Holocaust and WWII but realised not all is complete, there are gaps. It is those gaps he tried to fill with literature much like Blanchot did when he

said “Literature has the power to open ‘the other of any world’”. (Blanchot 309) For Littell there are two areas that are problematic for historians – the decision making processes that lead to genocide and the motives of perpetrators. (39) And Littell said that unfortunately there has been no “smoking gun” to help us fill the gaps. (40) As to the question “why the Jews?” Littell found his answer with Ian Kershaw. He described the Nazi system as a bureaucracy that was magnetized by a charismatic leader, and everybody aligns their work with the leader. Due to the alignment with Hitler, his “Bugs”, and here especially his hatred of Jews, become immensely important, and the Jewish problem becomes only priority as it is priority for the Führer. (43) He explains that Hitler was only really interested in the Jews and the Soviets otherwise he would have killed all gypsies or all homosexuals. Instead there were only ad-hoc solutions. Homosexuals were not given to Himmler who would have loved to exterminate them as much as Hitler did with the Jews. There were laws to say that homosexuals would go to jail not to concentration camps. The bureaucratic cogs were operating against each other and therefore there was no inclusive extermination policy for gypsies or homosexuals. (43-44) Regarding the Jews, Littell feels there was a split in the bureaucratic apparatus between those who wanted to come to a constructive solution for the Jews and those who didn’t. And those who did not would be neutralised.(44) Due to the bureaucratic wrangling which Littell has described time and time again in his novel, cumulative radicalisation happened not so much as all in the regime were anti-Semites but because all the bureaucratic units working for the regime wanted to be part of the solution of Hitler’s problem. (44-45)

Littell sees the historian’s position as difficult as they do not have the right “intuitive Sprünge zu machen und imaginative Sympathie zu empfinden.” (45) Littell, as well as Hilberg, see in the German bureaucracy “die Akteurin der Ausrottung”. (46) Littell stressed that German

anti-Semitism was a process much more than content or substance. (Marginalien Littell 49)

He feels that the Germans constructed themselves in relation to “The Other” and the primary reflex was the rejection of that “Other” who was not specifically chosen. (49) For Littell it is paramount to ask the right questions, such as why did – after WWI – three European societies – Germany, Austria and Russia – decide that extermination was a solution to their social problems and others did not. Those who belonged to the victors, such as Italy, did not choose to exterminate problem categories but Austria, Germany and Russia did. He argues the trauma of the lost war destroyed the social consensus in Austria, Germany and Russia. (52)

This is shown in the passage in which Aue talks to the Soviet politruk as it shows Littell’s view that after the loss of WWI the German and Russian societies reconstructed themselves according to their historical contents – the Bolsheviks’ content was class, the Germans’ was race. (52)

Littell felt that the post-memorial culture was saturated with the iconography of suffering pertaining to the victims of the Holocaust, and with that comes the need to question the opinions we have formed so far, and Littell feels that the examination has to be perpetrator inclusive.

4.2. Reception of “The Kindly Ones”

In the public eye Jonathan Littell had not existed before the publication of “The Kindly Ones”. The novel did not only create praise but also rumours and critique such as that his father had written the novel, and debates on the morality and feasibility of giving voice to an executioner. The response to his novel was fairly predictable given the subject matter– some

vilified Littell as a Holocaust apologist especially as he questioned the accuracy of the term “Holocaust” and condemned Israel’s Palestine politics (Interview Haaretz) while others felt the text was nothing more than voyeuristic, pornographic kitsch. Some acknowledged Littell an extensive knowledge of the subject matter and German history, comparing the novel even to Tolstoy or Dostoevsky. I will summarise the main issues raised by Littell’s critics.

To Littell it was important to give the perpetrators a voice. He had experiences with perpetrators – not in Nazi Germany but with the Taliban, in the Russian Army in Chechnya, the Rwandans and Congolese. He wanted to find out about the decision making process of perpetrators and their motivations, and that is why he put himself into the shoes of a perpetrator. (Marginalien 39) According to Littell, while historians of the Shoah explored the issue of perpetrators for years, it was the question regarding the motives and motivations of perpetrators that still had to be answered. (Interview Blumenfeld)

As the text scans many themes that could be seen as taboo such as the representation of the Holocaust or giving the perpetrator a voice, the reception of the novel was predictably mixed. In France, where the novel was first published, “Les Bienveillantes” won the 2006 “Prix Goncourt” and the “Grand Prix du Roman” of the Académie Française and the novel was reviewed extensively and mainly with great enthusiasm. Littell told author Samuel Blumenfeld of the *Le Monde des Livres* that he “was not expecting to sell more than a few hundred copies” when his agent, Andrew Nurnberg, told him he liked the novel. He was wrong as hundreds of thousands of copies have been sold in France alone. Discussions with literary critics put the success of the novel down to its subject matter of Nazism and the Holocaust, and France’s relationship to that period in history. The readers’ thirst for long,

novelistic, intricately structured books could also explain the novel's success. It is indeed a text of epic proportions. The novel created a hype especially as the author was not German, did not even speak German but dared to put himself in the shoes of a German SS officer. His novel could be seen as relativisation of what had happened in Germany during the war especially as Littell argued that murdering the Jews was not a specifically German matter. This argument would serve to anthropologise the Holocaust and to deny it the categorisation of a German phenomenon. Littell used a German theme to find answers about what is common in perpetrators and ultimately strikes at the heart of the questions about common humanity and morality. But as German writer and sociologist Klaus Theweleit countered: "Littell does not absolve the Germans, he potentially incriminates everybody. That is the difference." (Interview Theweleit)

Littell's Jewish heritage was seen by French historian Pierre Nora as the very reason why only he could have written a text such as "The Kindly Ones". (Marginalien Littell 47) German journalist Frank Schirmacher felt a scandal that a Jewish author put himself into the shoes of a Nazi. (Schirmacher 33) Lanzmann felt initially that only witnesses of the Shoah had a right to write a text about the Holocaust. (Marginalien 18) Lanzmann later met Littell and felt he had misjudged Littell initially. (Marginalien 15) After initially calling the novel a "poisonous flower of evil" in an interview in Le Journal de Dimanche, Lanzmann later declared "Littell hat die Sprache der Henker erfunden. [...]" (Marginalien 21) Critics took affront as Littell was himself no witness of the Holocaust. Closely linked to the challenges of representation of the Holocaust, some critics felt that Littell's text dishonoured the victims of Hitler's genocide (Weidermann), and perhaps exonerated the perpetrators. Littell's narrator shows no remorse. In the text, the victims do not occupy much space at all. They do not have a voice at all. German FAZ correspondent Juerg Altwegg saw this positively: "Doch

seine Lebenserinnerungen sind nicht die erstickten Worte eines Opfers, das nach Sprache ringt, um das Unfassbare zu formulieren. Selbstherrlich, offensiv erzählt der Täter von seinen Verbrechen und seiner Existenz als Teil der totalitären Maschinerie, in der er sich wohl heimisch fühlte.” (“Leute, jeder ist ein Deutscher” Altwegg 40)

Littell was heavily criticised for writing his novel from the perspective of a perpetrator. Fictional representations of Nazi perpetrators as first person narrators were not new in French or other literature. John Hawkes’s “The Cannibal” (1949) springs to mind as well as Robert Merle’s 1952 “Death is my trade”, Michel Tournier’s 1970 novel “The Ogre”, Edgar Hilsenrath’s “The Nazi and the Barber, a tale of vengeance” (1971 in the US and 1977 in Germany due to difficulties finding a publisher in Germany because of perpetrator narrative), and also auto-biographical accounts by SS-doctor Johann Kremer and Auschwitz commander Rudolf Höss (1958) were published as forerunners to a perpetrator such as Dr. Aue. Not only in Germany but also in countries such as France and the US a re-evaluation of the perpetrator generation happened due to the emergence of post-war Holocaust literature and other media. The late Spanish writer Jorge Semprum wrote: “Natürlich haben wir die Zeugnisse der Opfer und die Dokumente in den Archiven. Aber nur die Dichter können das Erinnern erneuern.” (Interview Semprum/Altwegg 35) It was Semprum as well that felt that Littell had “den Paradigmenwechsel vom persönlichen Zeugnis der überlebenden Opfer zur fiktionalen Gestaltung durch die Nachgeborenen vollzogen und somit den Übergang der Erinnerungslast der Shoah von einer Generation auf die nächste eingeleitet.” (von Kloppenfels 253) A general divide seemed to exist between those hailing the text a masterpiece and those who thought it distasteful and awful. Harrprecht noted in FAZ that the text was “...ein Geniestreich und der letzte Dreck [...], ein Kunstwerk, vor dem jeder Sinn für Ästhetik in die Knie gehe, und eine Schlammlawine des Kitsches.” (Harrprecht L6)

Kitsch was a term used by others such as “Nazikitsch” (Krause, 2006), “scandalous Kitsch” (Mönninger, 2006) or “Holocaust Kitsch” (Hussey, 2009).

Most critics praised the historical accuracy of the text. To be mentioned here in particular is that Littell did not spare the gruesome details in his text. Littell incorporated many of the historical debates such as Browning ⁶, Goldhagen ⁷ and Arendt ⁸, and one cannot fault his extensive knowledge of the subject matter. In Germany – the land of the perpetrators – reactions were heated after the publication in 2008. The novel was hailed in Germany for its incredible precision in the historic details. Littell had devoured over 200 texts on the subject before he started writing the novel. Some though felt the historical details to be redundant. German writer and sociologist Harald Welzer argued: “[...] langatmig, ungeheuer redundant, es wiederholte sich viel, und es gibt endlose Aufzählungen. [...]” (Billerach) This was a common critique perhaps in the context of the general German population being well educated in the facts and figures of their country’s past.

One of the most discussed themes was the plausibility of the perpetrator and his journey.

Littell said he was not interested in plausibility. (Marginalien Littell 32) Many said it was not

⁶ Christopher Browning, “Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland”, Harper, 1992: This volume examines in details how Nazi racial policy was also carried out by “ordinary” Germans while research up until then had focused more on the role of Hitler, Nazi ideology and the structure of the German dictatorship with complicity of various professions and institutions. Browning studied an exemplary case of a Police Battalion to examine individual participation in mass killings and genocides.

⁷ Daniel Goldhagen, “Hitler’s willing executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust”, Knopf, 1996: This work highlights the author’s opinion that the vast majority of Germans were “willing executioners” in WWII and under the regime of Adolf Hitler because of a unique centuries-old eliminationist anti-Semitism in German society and culture.

⁸ Hannah Arendt, “Eichmann in Jerusalem: A report on the banality of evil”, Penguin, 1963: Arendt introduced the “Banality of evil” as she assessed Eichmann not to be a fanatic or sociopath but someone who had internalised the clichés of the Nazis and was only interested in his career and professional development.

realistic for Aue to be in all the described Holocaust locations we find in the text. Littell also added details to events that did not happen in order to fortify his protagonist's tale. There were also some who said Aue was entirely plausible. Jürg Altwegg stated: "[...] doch gerade in der Verdichtung und Üppigkeit wirkt Max Aue überaus glaubhaft. Man schluckt alles, auch die unglaublichsten Erfindungen und Kombinationen und verzeiht Jonathan Littell die paar nicht mehr besonders originellen historischen Exkurse, zum Beispiel zum Systemvergleich zwischen Hitler und Stalin." (Altwegg 40) It was especially German critics who perceived the narrator to be totally unrealistic. Littell used Aue to portray different facets of the Nazi regime, and in Aue we find a multi-faceted narrator and perpetrator. Other critics focused on more negative aspects such as Die Zeit Journalist Iris Radisch: "Why on earth should we read a book by an educated idiot who writes badly, who is stricken with sexual perversion and who has abandoned himself to an elitist racist ideology and an archaic belief in destiny? I'm afraid, mes chers amis français, I have to admit, I still haven't found the answer to this question." (Radisch)

Another theme often reviewed was that of Littell's pornographic style with some critics labelling him a pornographer of violence. (Steinfeld) The perpetrator is a "Sinnesmensch", wherever he goes, he sees, smells, hears and feels. His sexual excesses and transgressions and his phantasies are described extremely detailed. Critics asked themselves if these details had any bearing on what we could learn from the novel. Germany's arthistorian and journalist Wiegand saw this as evidence for the filthy world in which Aue and the Nazis lived: "...in Aues Welt aber ist alles verdreckt, denn diese ganze Welt der Nazis ist sowieso nur eine einzige grosse Sauerei." (Wiegand 33)

The overlaying of the Oresteia also added confusion for some readers. Editor of Die Tageszeitung, Dirk Knipphals comments: “Das Problem ist, dass man nicht recht weiss, ob man diese Spur wirklich erstnehmen soll. Letztendlich bleibt es bei einem Nebeneinander der emotionalen Familienkatastrophe und des Holocaust.” (Knipphals) Aue was constructed as a homosexual matricide that had an incestuous relationship with his sister when he was young. Such an abnormal perpetrator was for some critics completely implausible, for some “absurd with a well-educated and gay Nazi, a cliché.” (Schöttler) Other themes discussed were Aue’s dual nationality, and his affinity to French culture and literature.

The reception in the US was mixed. More positive feedback came from critics such as Columbia University professor Samuel Moyn who states the novel “deserves its praise” (Moyn) as Littell uses “an impeccable literary style”. Moyn was of the opinion that Aue was a “Nazi-Selig” who was “representative of the German nation and all of its sins”. Author Ruth Franklin called the novel “not an important novel, because it absolutely fails to add anything of significance to our understanding of the subject.” (“Night and Cog” Franklin 38-42), however she also stated “we need literature about the Holocaust not only because testimony is inevitably incomplete, but because of what literature uniquely offers: an imaginative access to past events, together with new and different ways of understanding them that are unavailable to strictly factual forms of writing.” (Franklin 13)

It was also said that the author perhaps did not provide any criticism of the perpetrator he portrayed. German journalist Dr. Hildegard Lorenz criticised: “das Fehlen der Distanzierung des Autors von seiner Hauptfigur im Roman.” (Lorenz) Radisch went even further, accusing Littell of “Veredelung des Edel-Nazis”. (Radisch)

Perhaps the most important question that concerns critics and readers when perusing and reviewing a text is “Why?” an author wrote a text. From the totally different reviews we can deduce that Littell opened discussions worldwide on the issue of perpetration of the Holocaust, and certainly added a new dimension to the Vergangenheitsbewältigung that is ongoing worldwide, and on the question how fairly ordinary, educated and civilised people become perpetrators and mass murderers. Most reviews regarding this aspect were negative. Radisch argued in her review: “He did not answer the question”. Journalist Anne Catherine Simon feels that it is not possible “das Geheimnis des Bösen zu lüften.” (Simon) Author and journalist Gudrun Norbistrath writes: “Dass der Mensch schlecht ist, wir wissen es. Auch, dass nicht nur deutsche Menschen schlecht sind; es hilft uns aber nicht bei der Frage nach dem Holocaust. [...] Es ist das falsche Buch, um die Wahrheit zu erfahren.” (Norbistrath) Welzer (“*Am Ende bleibt die Faszination*” Welzer) and Dotzauer (Dotzauer) also disapproved, and even said it was detrimental to the search for truth about perpetrators.

However, well-known German author Alexandra Senfft feels the text brings to mind “das Gewicht des Vergangenheits, den Schmerz des Lebens” and as such is “aufwühlend – und so lesenswert.” (Senfft)

The various strands Littell constructed have spoken to readers worldwide in different ways as we can see by the mixed reception of the text. The different levels Littell created in the novel bring to life an extinct history in the context of different arenas such as political sciences, psychoanalysis, sociology, anthropology, and especially with regards to

Vergangenheitsbewältigung and Erinnerungsliteratur. Some readers seem content with matricide and murder, sex, incest and the gruesome and grotesque as essential elements in bringing back this part of history while enhancing the reading experience.

The reception of Littell's novel must be seen in the context of the emergence of post-war and also post-reunification perpetrator texts. Victim testimonies had been of major importance after WWII, mostly focusing on Jewish victim identity. Littell's novel is posited in direct opposition to Lanzmann's "obscurity of understanding" (Shoah 1985) of the Shoah which could have meant putting ourselves in a position where entering a perpetrator's mind might be construed as understanding or sympathising with a perpetrator. This was perceived to be a morally challenging position. With the emergence of Väterliteratur and later Enkelliteratur which looked in detail at perpetrators in a familial arena, there was increasing effort to focus on the motivations of perpetrators, including not only notions of what kind of perpetrators could be identified or what would turn a person into a perpetrator but what would turn a whole country into a nation of perpetrators. Littell's text adds another dimension to this difficult task as the reader enters into a danger zone where a character like Aue, a true Nazi monster, somehow manages to arouse not only interest but might also arouse a degree of understanding and even sympathy in the reader.

4.3. Content and style – overview of "The Kindly Ones"

The novel is essentially a two part novel. The first part is the fact laden report of the murderous campaigns of the German Nazi regime in Eastern Europe and Russia. It includes personal information about the narrator which begins before the war. The second part depicts

the events after Germany's defeat in Russia in February 1943 and ends with the death marches from Auschwitz in 1945 which traces the narrator's career to the end of the war when he escapes to France. The text is divided into seven chapters. The seven chapters are Toccata, Allemandes I and II, Courante, Sarabande, Menuet (en Rondeaux), Air and Gigue, all names of individual compositions by Bach which together form a suite. They were later adapted to form individual baroque dances. I will not deal with the meaning of the chapter headings apart from mentioning a comment Littell made in terms of the tone of his novel which might have had to do with his choice of the chapter headings. (Marginalien 55-57)

4.4. Summary of chapters and Dr. Aue's role in the Nazi regime

Toccata – In the first chapter we are introduced to the narrator's background and the reasons for writing down his thoughts. We learn that he went to WWII, first to Shitomir, Ukraine in 1941. (Littell 8) The chapter reveals he is a homosexual and hints at an incestuous love affair with his twin sister when they were young children.

Allemandes I & II - This is the second longest chapter in the novel. It is a chapter in which Aue tells us "how it happened" (Littell 3), changing tempo from long run-on sentences to short and matter-of-fact sentences, mirroring his inner emotions and thoughts relaying his experiences in WWII. This chapter together with the *Menuet* chapter can be seen as the historical centre of the novel. The chapter introduces the narrator's professional background as an officer of the SD, his Einsatz in Ukraine, the Crimea and the Caucasus and his experiences at Babi Yar. He works for the Sicherheitsdienst as an informant. Although he wants the reader to believe he was mainly a reporter and did not really participate in the war,

we know that he was an informant and assessor who planned and coordinated the practical aspects that lead to the German atrocities in Shitomir (Babi Yar), Poltava and Kharkov. He is quickly promoted to “Hauptsturmführer”. After he suffers exhaustion and has a spell in a clinic at Yalta, he becomes second in charge to Otto Ohlendorf, head of Sonderaktion D in Simferopol, Crimea. Aue is an expert in Caucasian studies. This chapter also depicts the beginning of the narrator’s mental breakdown while being part of the cleansing actions against the Jews and his seemingly critical stance towards the regime.

Courante – This chapter depicts the experiences in the Kessel as the 6th Army struggles in Stalingrad where Aue works in the capacity of an intelligence officer for the SD as part of the Feldpolizei. He describes as his tasks: “collecting gossip, rumours, and Latrinenparolen and reporting on the soldiers’ morale; fighting Russian defeatist propaganda; and maintaining a few informers, civilians, often children who slipped from one line to the other”. (356) This chapter also gives more insight into Aue’s childhood and family background, and stresses his continued intellectual support for the Nazi ideology. He barely survives being shot through the head and is airlifted to Berlin.

Sarabande – This chapter shows Aue’s slow recovery in Hohenlychen, Berlin and Usedom. He is promoted to Sturmbannführer. After Aue recovers, he travels to Paris and onto Antibes where he kills his mother and stepfather. He flees the scene, apparently not remembering what he has done.

Menuet en rondeaux – This is the longest chapter in the novel. Aue is appointed to Himmler's personal staff, and is happy about his promotion into a supervisory role for Germany's concentration camps concerned with improving the living conditions of prisoners that are needed to secure Germany's war production. This position makes him a "Geheimnisträger" (545) as he will witness what is going on in all of the German camps. He is asked to investigate internal conflicts of the SS-personnel and also external conflicts and the corruption of personnel in the camps which is extensive. Nazi bureaucrats such as Eichmann, Speer, Höss and Pohl are in a constant tug of war between the demands of war production and the demands of Nazi ideology. This chapter brings to life the polycratic nature of the Nazi system. Himmler personally employs him to coordinate representatives of all departments concerned with the nutrition of prisoners in the camps to increase their production. Some of his recommendations are put into practice. He is promoted to Obersturmbannführer. He is also part of a unit that in Budapest convinces the Hungarians to establish a Jewish "Zentralrat" which will provide Jewish workers for Germany. His mission in Hungary fails due to the wrangling of all involved. He goes back to Berlin. In this chapter two detectives, Weser and Clemens, also begin investigating Aue for his part in the murder of his mother and stepfather. The situation in Germany gets worse by the day. Aue coordinates the evacuation of Auschwitz as the Russians are approaching.

Air - Aue has gone to his sister's house in Pomerania to visit his sister but finds the house deserted. Here he engages in an autoerotic orgy stimulated by imaginations and fantasies of his sister and his fantasy to be a woman and to become his sister. The Russians are on his doorsteps as well as the two detectives who hound him for the murder of his mother and stepfather.

Gigue – In this chapter Aue is rescued by his friend and his driver. The chapter depicts their horrendous journey through Soviet occupied territory back to Berlin where he continues to gather intelligence in a position as Verbindungsoffizier for the “Oberkommando des Heeres”. Defeat is imminent. Aue meets the Führer, and inexplicably bites him in the nose. (960) He flees, and on his way through the Berlin underground is followed not only by the Germans but the Russians and the two detectives. One is killed by Russian bullets, and the other by Thomas which Aue kills in turn to get his hands on the false papers and uniform of a French STO conscripted worker Thomas had organised. Aue flees to France from where he tells his story decades later.

Before I discuss the genre of “The Kindly Ones” I would like to discuss Littell’s choice of the 1st person narrator which embeds in the generic discussions in terms of claims of historical objectivity and the representation of WWII and the Holocaust, and with regards to the examination of the perpetrator. The use of the I-perspective sinks the reader straight into the psyche of the narrator-perpetrator. Using a 1st person narration gives the author an opportunity to create his narrator with certain traits and characteristics and therefore could influence the reader’s perception. The I-perspective creates a connection with the reader, perhaps even a certain intimacy, which might lead to more understanding, sympathy or empathy for Littell’s protagonist.

In an interview with Pierre Nora, Littell stated that he could only write from the I-perspective as it allowed him distance. (Marginalien 30) Littell wanted to give the perpetrator a voice,

and through Aue's perspective, Littell can say many things – some of which have been taken as Littell's opinion as the review of his critics has shown. Littell also said that he was afraid that there was too much of the "he" (Aue) in himself. (30) Littell reflects that "[...], doch ich habe nun einmal für diese Person Modell gestanden. Ihr Bezug zur Welt ist von meinem nicht weit entfernt, selbst wenn ich auf der einen und sie auf der anderen Seite steht." (30) Von Kloppenfels analysed this in terms of another aspect of the choice of I-Perspective as the construct of "... alter egos [...] mit pathologischen Aussetzern entwerfen. Sie ermöglichen damit nicht nur die negative Identifizierung vom Typus *Das bin ich nicht*, sondern auch die radikalere Selbstentlastung, die da sagt: *Ich bin nicht ich*." (von Kloppenfels 264)

The perspective of the narrator also has to be discussed in terms of the representation of WWII and the Holocaust. Any perpetrator perspective needs to be seen within the framework of the discussions in both historiography as well as literary theory which suggest that the unprecedented nature of the event exceeds the limits of traditional frames of reference. Limits of representation of the Holocaust have been discussed as a taboo in the precarious moral framework by scholars such as Lanzmann (Caruth ed. 1995), Friedländer (Probing the limits 1992), Laub and Felman (Testimony 1992), LaCapra (History and Memory 1998) and Ezrahi (Representing Auschwitz, 1996) and others who attempt to guard the Holocaust from trivialisation, relativisation and fictionalisation. While experts and critics have argued that the Holocaust cannot and should not be represented, a staggering number of works have appeared and continue to appear doing just that. This "event at the limits" (Friedländer) seems to have a firm hold on the world. Some argued that the Holocaust was an event without a witness as the Nazis exterminated not only the physical witnesses of their crimes but that the "inherently, incomprehensible and deceptive psychological structure of the event precluded its own witnessing, even by its very victims." (Felman/Laub 65) Anyone who

“witnessed” the events would have been sufficiently contaminated by the events and not been able to “remain a fully lucid, unaffected witness, [...] sufficiently detached from the inside so as to stay entirely outside the trapping roles, and the consequent identities, either of the victim or the executioner. No observer could remain untainted.” (66)

Aue claims that he can tell the reader “how it happened” as he was there. To us it might be more significant if we asked not if we should try to represent and depict the Holocaust but how we can depict it in order to bear witness and make sense of it. Littell’s perpetrator is a new kind of witness and in his construct, literature might reveal new answers and we might glimpse new revelations about understanding perpetrators without minimising the historical place of the Holocaust. In this way perpetrator fiction may trigger a new interest in the wider genre of Holocaust literature that might otherwise not be attained. In imposing limits upon the representation, we may inadvertently reproduce oppression of such rights as freedom of speech, expression and even imagination especially in literature similar to what we remember as being perpetuated by the Nazi regime. Yann Martel, author of the controversial Holocaust novel “Beatrice and Virgil” argues that “The fear of trivialisation is the result of limiting our representations of the event” and “By freeing up our representations of the Holocaust we will secure, overall, a greater, more nuanced, and more useful understanding of it.” (Barber)

While perusing “The Kindly Ones” we notice a certain hybridity in terms of genre. I will emphasise three areas in particular that highlight the hybridity.

4.5. Confession, memoir and the “Toccata” chapter

In the first chapter called “Toccata” (from Italian, toccare = to touch) the narrator directly addresses his readers as: “Oh my human brothers, let me tell you how it happened. I am not your brother, you’ll retort, and I do not want to know. [...] And also, this concerns you: you’ll see that this concerns you.” (Littell 3) This first line echoes the first words of one of the most famous French poems, “Ballad of the Hanged” by Francois Villon.^{xiii} The poem asks for the human brothers to not harden their hearts against the hanged so God may pardon them. The hanged portray themselves not to be of “sound sense” and assume the position of victims. They ask their “brothers” to have mercy on them in return for God’s mercy. The narrator in “The Kindly Ones” makes a similar appeal to the readers in which Manfred von Kloppenfels sees as a “posthume Unverschämtheit. [...] dann ist die captatio ganz und gar böseartig mutiert. Das Motiv der hämischen Verbrüderung dient bei Baudelaire bereits dem gleichen Zweck, den es dann bei Littell hat: Es soll den Leser kompromittieren, seine Teilhabe am Verbrechen unterstellen.” (von Kloppenfels 260) Aue explicitly states that the story does involve the readers. (Littell 3)

The narrator creates a position in which the reader initially might feel empathy with him. He comments he “could commit suicide though it does not tempt him” (3), that he “wasn’t the only one who lost his head” (5), he “emerged from the war an empty shell” (12), that as a young man he “wanted to study literature and philosophy above all else but was not allowed to do so” (10), and that “we live in the worst of all possible worlds” (17) and “I found myself at the heart of terrible things, atrocities”. (24) He justifies “There were always reasons for what I did. Good reasons or bad reasons, I do not know, in any case human reasons.” (24) The comments serve to defend his position, or to soften the reader. His self-perceived victim-status is especially clear when he says: “But my hopes were dashed, and my sincerity was betrayed and placed at the services of an ultimately evil and corrupt work, and I crossed

over to the dark shores, and all this evil entered my own life, and none of all this can be made whole, ever.” (24) Martin von Kloppenfels views the creation of the 1st person narrator as an opportunity to be not only person but victim. (von Kloppenfels 261) Von Kloppenfels sees Aue as an excellent example of a transition from perpetrator to victim through the use of the I-perspective. (262) His confession is that of a martyr. (262) He grew up without a father, hated his mother, was abused by priests and schoolmates at boarding school, had an incestuous relationship with his sister but turned into a homosexual Nazi, was dragged through the killing fields of WWII and barely survived Stalingrad. However, the reader soon realises this narrator is anything but a victim; he is a cynic and self-righteous. The first chapter is full of cynical reflections on his past and present life, cynical reflections on his wife and children, mother and stepfather, and attempts at justifications on how he turned out – essentially burnt-out and empty, sarcastic and judgemental. It is full of chilling irony and assumptions.

Aue’s confession potentially compromises the reader as it might create sympathy for the narrator, and leave the reader in danger of forging the fraternal bond the narrator is speaking about. The reader is in a position where the narrator insists on the commonality of their experiences, and this is especially highlighted by the second-person address of the reader. The I-perspective calls upon the reader to scrutinise not only the perpetrator but also his own position as reader in the consumption of the text, and therefore a self-critical stance against the novel which is however hindered by the narrator’s address of the reader. The “Toccata” chapter should also heed the warning that this text will challenge the common identification of readers of Holocaust literature with the victims and not the perpetrators of the Holocaust.

I have already established that Aue is writing a confession. The genre of memoir is a record composed from personal observation and experience. It is related closely to autobiography but concerns itself more with persons who have played roles in, or have been close observers, of historical events and whose main purpose is to describe or interpret the events. The text follows the conventions of an auto-biography of a fictional character. So far the term memoir could be applied to Littell's novel – if we see it as the narrator's memoir. It is not a real memoir but that of a fictional character. Littell transgresses genres, he plays with them, part documentary and part literature. The term "memoir-novel" describes Littell's novel as "the narrator is a fictional character, but historical personages and events are introduced as a kind of authentication." Further characteristics of memoir-novel are lying "in the opportunities offered by this form for analysis and exploration of the narrator's personality. This subjective approach opened the way to more subtle and complex characterization than had appeared in most previous novels with external narrators." These novels are completely or partially imaginary. Littell's text follows the characteristics of a memoir novel describing the narrator's path to the killing fields of war, memories of the atrocities and his admissions of his engagement in not only the events of war but personal crimes and murders all including information about his childhood and youth in almost chronicled and biographic form. Different strands of genre come together in "The Kindly Ones" giving it the characteristics of a hybrid form.

Aue claims he is writing down his story "to set the record straight for myself, not for you" (Littell 3) He also states he never had the need to write his memoir: he is not doing it for economic reasons nor to suffer a little more. He assures us that that he does not write to justify his actions and that his writing will be "free of any form of contrition. I do not regret anything: I did my work, that's all" (5) but perhaps "[...] to get my blood flowing, to see if I

can still feel anything, if I can still suffer a little.” (12) There are further explanations as to why he is writing down his story. Indeed, the most important disclosure seems to be that to tell his story is to seek the truth. (12) When we think back to the opening statements about Aue’s past, the reader soon realises that all these statements are part of a deception of the reader. The narrator pleads for the reader to recognise he is a human brother and to grant him a place in humanity, but at the same time tells the reader that he feels no remorse and is in fact guilty in some of the worst crimes the 20th century had seen. It is therefore a direct provocation to tell the reader that he is like the reader. (33)

His confession initially compromises the reader. The reader soon realises this is an intellectual, a learned man who with intelligence and a certain moral ability though emotional detachment writes his confession. With regards to confessional writing, Littell makes a conscious choice to accord the perpetrator a certain degree of morality and entrust him to tell the reader “how it happened”. (3) The ethical engagement becomes clear in Aue’s somatic symptoms which accompany Aue through the stages of war, sometimes severe and sometimes less severe or even completely absent. His constipation and his vomiting are a physical expression and indicative of his psychological well-being. The confessional style seems to go hand in hand with the need of cleansing. (12) His words raise disturbing issues, and though he pleads for understanding, he provokes the reader constantly with comments which have the opposite effect. Von Kloppenfels terms this “captatio malevolentiae” which is “Ablehnungs-Heilschen”. (von Kloppenfels 260) He states: “Aue spekuliert auf den Gattungsbegriff ‘Mensch’, aus dem die Opfer der von ihm vertretenen Vernichtungspolitik gerade ausgeschlossen sind. Ein solcher Ausschluss steht fuer die Taeter, die Max Aue praesentiert, nicht zu Debatte. Sie sind mit Nietzsche schon allzumenschlich, mit Arendt

banal, und mit Christopher Browning ordinary men.” (260) But Aue is anything but an ordinary or banal man.

Keeping this in mind the reader is in a precarious situation where the narrator, who portrays himself as the prototype of normality, is able to project his apparent humanity as the same humanity as his readers which initially seems entirely plausible and comprehensible. The narrator exists in a variety of functional dimensions which become clear in further discussion and due to the narrator’s multiple functions could certainly coerce empathy or identification or complicity.

4.6. Historical novel and the role of Dr. Maximilian Aue as perpetrator

“The Kindly Ones” is the tale of WWII and the Eastern Front through the fictional memories of an articulate, learned and intellectual jurist and SS officer who was active member of the Nazi security forces – beginning his political career in a special commando in 1941 in the Ukraine plunging the reader straight into the atrocities committed by Germans in Eastern Europe (beginning with Babi Yar).

He is in Berlin during Germany’s final battle from which he flees to France hunted as a murderer. The events are based on historical events researched by Littell – he read two hundred texts about Nazi Germany and the Eastern Front, the Holocaust and WWII and visited many places of interest in Germany and Eastern Europe. Littell traces the original inspiration for the novel to a photo of a Soviet partisan named Zoya Kosmodemyanskaya hung by the Nazis in 1941, and he also drew inspiration from watching Claude Lanzmann’s

film “Shoah”, an acclaimed documentary about the Holocaust. (Marginalien 29) “The Kindly Ones” was in part inspired also by the horrors Littell witnessed in the war-torn countries such as Bosnia and Chechnya. (25-26)

Dr. Robert Buch from the University of New South Wales comments that Littell painstakingly reconstructs “the sites and the logistics of the genocidal operations; the bizarre and byzantine ramifications of the Nazi organisations and their hierarchies, and the turns and twists a career in them could take; but also the ideological debates within the interwar right-wing and Nazi intelligentsia”. (*“Fascinating Facticity”* Buch) Critics could not fault Littell’s historical research. Especially Claude Lanzmann attested Littell complete accuracy with regards to historical facts. (Altwegg/Lanzmann 18-19) In its scope and extent the text reminds of a Russian epic such as Tolstoy’s “War and Peace” – perhaps with what Dr. Buch calls “conflicting aspirations of the epic-realist project”. (Buch) Littell applies the characteristics of the genre of historical novel when he places his narrator during a specific historical period as a formal framework that covers most facets of what historians have discussed for decades pertaining to perpetrator theories. Littell incorporated extensive historical research in a literary project to bring us closer to a perpetrator and our understanding of what happened where strong prose conjures a powerful sense of history.

Littell was influenced by writers such as Burroughs, Genet, Celine, Bataille, Sade and Grossmann. Littell does not simply aim to blur the lines between history and fiction but states that as an author he is in a position which enables him to do something historians cannot – he is able to be “intuitive and feel imaginative sympathy. (Marginalien 45)

With this in mind, one might agree with Susan Rubin Suleiman in that “Aue’s testimony becomes – despite his own fictional status – a historical testimony.” (“When the perpetrator becomes a reliable witness of the Holocaust” Suleiman) The biggest difference in terming the text a historical novel about WWII and the Holocaust could be seen in the narrator’s position: this is not a victim, this is not a Jew but a fictional Ex-Nazi SS-officer, a fictional perpetrator of the Holocaust. In terms of historiography, facticity and memory a fictional perpetrator witness might always rouse suspicion in readers and critics. Suleiman informs us that this kind of text is not new. Fictional as well as real perpetrators are depicted in Robert Merle’s “La mort est mon métier” (1952), the fictional version of Höss’ auto-biography as well as Höss’ actual memoir (1958) and Albert Speer’s (1970). In 1949 Jorge Luis Borge had written “Ein deutsches requiem”, the monologue of an unrepentant Nazi. Situated post-war we find Martin Amis “Time’s arrow” (1991), and more recently Volker Harry Altwasser’s “Letzte Haut” (2009), featuring a Nazi SS-judge protagonist. William T. Vollmanns’ “Europe Central” (2005) and Nicholson Baker’s “Human smoke” (2008) complement this list. I will discuss later how Aue’s dimensions are different from the perpetrators in aforementioned texts, especially with his dual status of “insider/outsider”. (Suleiman 105)

Historically accurate are not only the events but also their interpretations. Littell incorporates theories of historical debates about guilt and culpability and the theories of Hilberg, Browning, Goldhagen and Arendt and even makes comparisons to the Soviet regime. The narrator alludes to these discussions and gives his view of the relevance of these theories. Aue is the vehicle to depict diverse facets of the totalitarian Nazi regime and some of their interpretations. Littell’s text also has to be seen with regards to the “Bilderverbot der

Historiography". Critics such as Lanzmann, who can be seen as the father of the "Bilderverbot" of the Shoah (Shoah 1985) have vehemently discussed that the Holocaust cannot and should not be represented in visual forms. Littell's text is abound with graphic and visceral images where the depiction of actual historical events is continuously being merged with fictional elements. This is a text that crosses into different genres of fiction, historical novel and also Bildungsroman, in its aesthetic representation perhaps into the grotesque, and certainly seems well placed between the narratives of historiography and literature in terms of its demands on the philosophical, aesthetic or historical question on the visual representation of the Shoah. The hybridity of genre is fortified by its divergence into mythical and psychoanalytical elements. Littell does not adhere to Lanzmann's "Bilderverbot" of the Shoah with intensively explicit and vivid images. He seems representative of those who stand against a dogma of a complete "Bilderverbot" and more on the side with those that see the power visual images have. However, Littell could be criticised for his unhesitating, even unscrupulous illustrations of the Shoah which could be construed as voyeurism or labelled Hollywood-esque.

Another aspect with regards to the genre of historical novel would be the plausibility and reliability of a fictional Nazi perpetrator. He is positioned within the Nazi system as well as being out of the Nazi system in terms of his mental and psychological state: he is a homosexual, half French and half German, an intellectual with a sharp and analytical mind that sees through the regime's policies and procedures and time and time questions and criticises them, a matricidal truth seeker with unreliable recall and obsessed by phantasies about his twin sister. What sets him apart the most is the fact he has a conscience.

Implausible seems his presence at almost every major Holocaust location. Lanzmann said that Littell used history as memory. (Altwegg/Lanzmann 15) Indeed, Littell used history to

turn it into the narrator's memory. In the text Aue's memory is the Leitfaden through that part of German history. He relays the historical details from a retrospective point of view and with that marks the temporal and cognitive gap between the narrator in the 1970s France and the time he was a Nazi perpetrator in the war. Littell entrusts this perpetrator to tell the historical truth though he did not feel plausibility to be of major concern. (Marginalien 32)

Aue was simultaneously belonging to the Nazi system while reporting on it as if on the outside. This perpetrator seems almost removed from the events when he interprets what happens for the reader. He describes himself in terms of "seeing", "witnessing" and being like a camera that sees, or a cameraman, and then the interpreter of what the cameraman filmed. (107) Though he did not participate actively in the killing of German victims he was not only responsible for gathering the information the regime needed in order to perpetrate their atrocities, he "saw" it all and interpreted it all and still made the choice to stay. This traps Aue morally within the system as he seems affected by what he sees, at least initially, which places him in direct opposition to other perpetrators who seem unable to "see" what he sees. Laub and Felman discussed that no one could have been sufficiently removed from "trapping roles" of being inside the events, and it was inconceivable to not be contaminated by the events of WWII and the Holocaust. If Aue is inside and also outside, then he perhaps is not removed from the "trapping roles" but as an outsider takes his place as potential witness. ("*Testimony*" Felman/Laub) Suleiman calls this Aue's "insider/outsider"-status. (Suleiman 105) This narrator is a perpetrator witness in terms of what he witnessed. He was there. He saw and even participated. As the narrator he functions as a "[...] beschreibende Person [...], ein bequemes Vehikel für die glaubwürdige Entwicklung einer Beschreibung." (105) However his moral deficiencies and the mechanism of repression challenge this position of reliability, and therefore also his position of reliable witness. In addition, from the early pages onwards the narrator himself gives the reader the impression that his historical

recall might be flawed, for instance when he doesn't admit having met Hans Frank in Cracow. He also lies about other facts and all these instances add to Littell's construction of Aue's neurotic personality. Aue seems forgetful and often questions his own convictions. Later his reliability seems completely shattered as he cannot remember the murder of his mother and step-father. The construction of Aue's two sides, the psychological and the historical Aue, is complex in terms of the creation of a "Doppelmonster" that occupies a number of subject positions from which the reader will need to deduce what is believable and reliable, and where Aue's recall is flawed. Though we know Aue's historical recall to be absolutely correct, the psychological constantly interferes and confuses especially in terms of being a reliable source or witness. It is this ambiguity also that makes Aue more than a one-dimensional "banal" or "ordinary" Eichmann or a "bestial" Mengele but a multifaceted and multidimensional perpetrator. Littell stated that he needed to construct his perpetrator in the manner he did so the other Nazis would be more clearly contrasted. (Marginalien 53) We must constantly remind ourselves that the historical past presented is re-constructed in the memory of the perpetrator. History – as we have established to be accurate - is presented via the narrator's memory – which he himself time and time questions, and the reader also knows to be fragmentary and incomplete, and repressed. As Judith N. Klein reflects: "Die Brueche zwischen >>vergangener<< Gegenwart und >>jetziger<< Gegenwart des Ich-Erzaehlers Max Aue, zwischen Erfahrung und Erinnerung, zwischen dem beobachtenden Blick und dem Rueckblick sind Elemente der Verfremdung, die jede narrative Autoritaet, Klarheit und Sinnhaftigkeit in Frage stellen." (Klein 98) The text gives us a comprehensively researched and historically accurate account of the Nazi genocide for the period described as a framework to stage Aue's revelations. In terms of Aue's perpetrator profile and his identity as a Nazi, I will now examine further genres Littell drew upon to construct his perpetrator.

4.7. Family and psychological novel and Greek tragedy – psychoanalytical and mythical motivation of Dr. Maximilian Aue as perpetrator and the second part of the novel

As much as “The Kindly Ones” is about the history of the Third Reich and the Holocaust, the text is also the story of the narrator’s journey to a dark place, through the mud of his childhood and his youth, through the bloody and soul destroying killing fields of Eastern Europe and the concentration camp atrocities to his more than foggy and murky present day France of the 1970s. As part of the Littell’s literary construct, the personal story of the narrator adds a second strand to the narrative, situated in a demanding thematic framework complete with allusions to the ancient Greek myth of the Oresteia. This strand depicts the narrator’s psyche and reveals much about his status as a perpetrator. The novel is a sophisticated exploration into the collective pathology of Nazi perpetrator profiles, and above all an exploration of issues of morality – the perpetrators’ as well as the readers’.

The text converges into the genre of psychological novel. It is understood as a genre of prose fiction that focuses on the – to use it in its broadest sense – inner being of characters. This seems to be of at least equal importance than the events external to the characters, and in Littell’s novel we find the inner being of Aue a major part of the novel together with the information about his sexuality, obsessions, and in particular his unconscious motivations and motives. As this genre presents itself in many forms, it would be difficult to find a time for the origin of the genre but Shakespeare’s “Hamlet” or Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra’s “Don Quixote” are often mentioned. ^{xiv}

“The Kindly Ones” appears to be the depiction of the tale of a learned and civilised subject who seems extremely coherent. The reader finds in the narrator an educated intellectual which shows he is capable of moral reflections. In the text, mundane and often mind-numbing details are continuously being countered with horrific scenes of transgression, sado-masochistic overabundances, pornographic fantasies, scenes of bodily material being splattered at executions or when the narrator stains his sister’s house with semen and excrement, and indeed when the cold blooded, cruel and cynical narrator goes on a private killing spree with an axe.

Littell was heavily influenced by Flaubert and his scrupulously realistic depictions of life. (Marginalien 32) Apart from others such as Stendhal and Platon, Aue reads Burroughs and Bataille, authors of *la littérature du mal*, such as de Sade, Baudelaire, Nabokov, Lawrence, Ballard and Miller whose literature of taboos and violence, excess and transgression clearly influenced Littell in the creation of his protagonist.

The novel seems initially to be about a highly dysfunctional family, and it is indeed a family novel of hate and incest, sado-masochistic excesses and fantasies, and murder - lending themes from pornographic and psychoanalytical literature, a modern variation of a Greek tragedy, and testimonial literature. In the style of an intricate autobiographical discourse we learn much about Aue’s family background, especially family dynamics that turned into hatred of his mother who he blames for the disappearance of his father when he was a young boy. Aue is half French, half German. His father was member of the militant Freikorps, and disappeared from the family’s life in 1921. Aue spent his childhood in Germany and lived in France when adolescent. Aue’s mother remarried a French bourgeois, Moreau, who

apparently was connected to the French Resistance. Aue hates his mother for declaring his father dead and marrying Moreau. His mother does not approve of Aue joining the Nazis and their relationship is strained. We learn Aue became member of the NSDAP even before Hitler came to power which would indicate he seems more committed to Nazi ideology than he wants the reader to believe. We learn he has a twin sister, Una and they had an incestuous relationship when they were young until they were 14. They were discovered and separated. The name Una is of Latin origin, and it means “One”. This is significant when we think of Aue wanting to be a woman, wanting to be Una, which becomes more notable in the “Air” chapter. It is also significant in terms of Littell’s construction of Aue as part of a set of twins – siblings which could not be closer to each other. One becomes a mass murderer, the other one does not. Aue chooses a life without love but many gay sexual relationships in which he acts as the female. Una chooses a man in a wheelchair, their marriage is childless and they sleep in separate rooms but she loves him. Una has chosen a life of love with no sexuality, and Aue has chosen a life with occasional sexual encounters with men in which there is no love at all. Una’s husband is extremely critical of Germany’s regime as is Una who has become estranged to her brother following the war. We also learn of two twin children living with Aue’s mother and Moreau who seem to be the children of his incestuous relationship with Una.

The family story is embedded in the Greek Oresteia and also follows psychological thought patterns portraying Aue as a Freudian figure with his idiosyncratic, self-centred and self-interested persona whose incestuous as well as homosexual pleasures are hotly entangled with the hatred for his mother and stepfather, and issues of repression and self-deception. Throughout the depiction of the historical background we witness Aue’s moral and psychological disintegration and dissociation. Aue’s personal path seems to link directly with

broader German history, perhaps a little as Moyn stated in his review of “The Kindly Ones” in *The Nation* (Moyn), and the events of war and Holocaust help him decline quickly into murderous brutality, revenge, obsession and madness. It seems as one massacre follows another, Aue and his troops are progressively brutalised. The disintegration of his personality manifests in physical symptoms and somatic attacks, and the symptoms are a somatisation of his emotions and guilt. Later on the physical symptoms disappear – Aue’s spirit and soul become hardened more and more as his Nazi identity seems to take over. At this point I would like to point out that Aue has been driven mad by his incestuous and oedipal rage which can only be described as obsessive and neurotic, irrational and pathological. The reader will have to ask himself if the atrocities Aue has witnessed during the war were the reason for Aue’s criminality to come to the forefront more and more or had they been trigger for a criminality that was already innate long before the war? He spoke of stealing from neighbours as a child, his incestuous relationship with his sister which could be described as violent, and his homosexuality which got him recruited into the SD in the first place. Aue clearly had already been drawn to the radical long before he joined the SD.

In addition to many other references found in the text, the most important intertextual reference Littell makes is to the Aeschylus’ *Oresteia*, of which Aue’s personal saga is a clear reflection, almost a mirror image, and this strand helped Littell to construct the narrator’s status as a seemingly tragic figure. The importance of the Greek tragedy is already reflected in the title of the text. “The Kindly Ones” refers to Aeschylus’ trilogy of ancient Greek tragedies and is a translation of the Greek *Eumenides*, the name given to the goddesses of vengeance.^{xv} Aue reflects on the Greek understanding of guilt. He feels that for the Greek it did not matter if Herakles killed his children while he was deranged or whether Oedipus killed his father by accident. For him a crime is a crime no matter what the reasons are. This

is an important revelation with regards to the Toccata-chapter where he ask the reader for mercy, and quotes especially the human reasons he had for making his decisions. (Littell 593)

The timing of his reflections is also important as he reflects on guilt after he murders his mother and stepfather, and can thus be considered as Aue referring to his own guilt. He is therefore guilty of the crime, no matter what has lead him to commit it. His conception of the Greek concept of guilt is amplified when he speaks to Una about his emotions when delivering mercy killings of victims. He said he felt “no different giving a coup de grace than what he felt when he saw others shooting as he knew it had to be done. And that he was as responsible watching it as he would have been had he been shooting. (674) This is an important revelation from Aue which compromises not only hard core perpetrators but bystanders and followers alike and all those who supported the system in various ways, and it also means that Aue – who portrays himself as someone who only collected information or only gave mercy killing shots or someone who had been wronged by life and fate – is guilty just the same, especially regarding his role as observer in the Holocaust. Aue differentiates early on in the novel the responsibility we face in terms of criminal activities in contrast to the moral responsibility we have as human beings. (17) For Aue it does not matter how one ended up in Auschwitz as “Crime has to do with the deed, not the will.” (592)

In an interview with Florent Georgesco in 2006 Littell said that he thought he “really had the book” drawing on the Oresteia for inspiration, construction and organisation of the narrative. (Georgesco/Littell) Littell was interested in the psychological and even spiritual identity of perpetrators in terms of their motivations. Some critics such as Pierre Nora have seen in this the greatest of Littell’s transgression. (Marginalien Nora 46-47)

While Aue maintains an aura of rationality and conviction in the ideology of the Nazis and seems obsessed with his search for a mission, with an almost intellectual need for orderly circumstances and scientific explanations, Littell portrays this Nazi as having some moral scruples and some doubts about Nazi methods and ideology. He is contrasted with such characters as Turek, a raging, fanatical anti-Semite, or the banal Eichmann. We do know that Aue is a cynical, committed ideologist. He was no automaton, and proclaims it was “important not just to obey orders, but to adhere to them”. (Littell 43) He was offered to transfer from actions such as in Babi Yar but “stayed out of curiosity” (107) and in search for the absolute. He constantly claims that nobody had a choice. Already here he mentions that “But we had invented something compared to which war had come to seem clean and pure, [...]” (130) The longer he is with the SD and SS, the more hardened he becomes. He witnesses executions more and more though and he knows: “[...] By inflicting this piteous spectacle on myself, I felt, I wasn’t trying to exhaust the scandal of it, the insurmountable feeling of a transgression, of a monstrous violation of the Good and the Beautiful, but rather this feeling of scandal came to wear out all by itself, one got used to it, and in the long run stopped feeling much; thus what I was trying, desperately but in vain, to regain was actually that initial shock, that sensation of a rupture, an infinite disturbance of my whole being; [...]” (178-179)

While he mainly refers to the necessity of the Nazi measures and his Nazism as something he does out of duty and portrays himself in contrast to those Nazis that were raging anti-Semites such as the fanatical Turek – this will prompt the reader to think Aue might be better than others. He is obsessed with the absolute, not god but the nation with the Fuehrer at its helm, and a mania for order, cleanliness and efficiency. He is representative of an abstract and intellectual anti-Semitism, one Iris Radisch calls “Edel-Nazi”. (Radisch) Littell is familiar

with historians such as Browning (Ordinary men 1992), Goldhagen (Hitler's willing executioners 1996) and Arendt (Eichmann in Jerusalem 1963) and constructs Aue in terms of the findings about perpetrators of these historians so he is able to complete the psychological profile of this perpetrator. Littell gives this perpetrator a more caring side which becomes more and more redundant the longer he gets radicalised in the Nazi regime, and in the radicalisation of that side the reader will finally deduce that Aue is not ordinary nor a "human brother". As stated before, the humanisation of the perpetrator is seen by many critics as one of Littell's greatest transgressions.

Aue functions as a bureaucrat – at the beginning with a conscience and later with seemingly little and continuously lessening emotional involvement. While in the first chapter the victims of WWII and the Holocaust are numbers he still sees them as victims. He ponders their lives, their families, their family life – their humanity - but he soon becomes increasingly oblivious to their genocide. In the end he sees them simply as net-loss in terms of production. His ethical involvement is always short-lived and swiftly covered up with his own ailments such as diarrhoea and vomiting or the calls of duty, or even memories of his own childhood and upbringing. In a conversation with Thomas he states: "The murder of the Jews doesn't serve any real purpose. [...] It has no economic or political usefulness, it has no finality of a practical order. On the contrary, it's a break with the world of economics and politics. It's a waste, pure loss. That's all it is." (Littell 142) He is not concerned with the murder of the Jews from a moral or philanthropic perspective but justifies it in terms of economy and politics. He sees a breach with the world of economics and politics but not the complete breach and rupture of civilisation brought on by his regime. He keeps rationalising the Holocaust while at the same time his personality falls apart. The reader is confronted with a Nazi that tries to convince the reader that he is allegedly ordinary. His character soon

comes across more cynical than at the beginning, narcissistic and immensely self-centred. The mythical substructure of the text is added to bring together Aue's seemingly tragic status and family history while the genocide of European Jewry unfolds. They seem to be tied together in a somewhat fated way though we know that Nazi crimes were not fate or cosmic determinism but the crimes of perverted and evil minds. The genocide cannot be seen as an effect of fate but has to be seen as an effect of actions and decisions made by human beings. The family plot interweaves constantly with the depiction of war and the wrangling of the Nazi rank and file and the policies behind the Nazi machinery. Littell thought in structures to create his text and the structure can be seen in the relation of the two strands of narrative in his text. (Marginalien 34) It seems they exist side by side to complement each other. While Littell worked on his text, he had in mind the intellectual milieu in which he placed his perpetrator so could construct him other than an "average" or "ordinary" Nazi. (35) Littell constructed the two different sides of Aue as a "Doppelmonster". Though Aue is a Nazi through and through, Littell gives him human dimensions such as empathy and also weaknesses. (63-64) But in the end this is one and the same person. When thinking back of the initial position of the reader where one maybe even likes Aue for showing empathy with the German victims, it is the Nazi ideologist who has the ability to see through the regime that repels us.

The reader knows that Aue lacks credibility when he turns into a matricidal killer, and cannot remember it. This is not his first murder either, and it will not be his last. During the novel his family history turns into a personal vendetta against the mother and stepfather much like the Oresteia. There is a clear increase and intensification in Aue's self-deluding discourse and his mania – his relationship with Una, or when he describes Hitler as a Jewish rabbi, or bites the Fuehrer in the nose at the end of the novel, and it goes hand in hand with the

radicalisation of the Nazi perpetrator. The reader will have to ask himself – especially after the killing of his mother and stepfather – whether Aue is really a perpetrator that hardened with the events he participates in or whether he, in fact, had already been a criminal before he joined the SD. Let us look at the matricide further.

In the killing of his mother and stepfather we witness the total dominance of Aue's infantile repression. Aue likens the bloodbath in his mother's house in Antibes to the house of Atreus. In Stalingrad, as the Russians crash through the lines, Aue finds an edition of Sophokles, with the Electra intact. His mind is cast back to when he was allowed to play Electra in a school play. In this passage he makes another remark which is "[...] I was sobbing, and the butchery in the House of Atreus was the blood in my own house." (Littell 411) This remark is very important as the bloodbath in his mother's house had not happened yet when he was young so this must be an allusion to the murder of his mother and stepfather. Aue recalls the Electra scene and then makes reference to the murder of his mother and stepfather, the blood in his own house. Aue makes several remarks that link his personal history with the crimes of the Nazis. Littell said in his interview with Pierre Nora that the Nazis "...in Abhängigkeit von Problemkategorien und Problemlösungen dachten und argumentierten – Lösungen, die den Massenmord miteinschlossen." (Marginalien 43) Perhaps this is what Aue is talking about when he reflects: "As I worked, I thought: in the end, the collective problem of the Germans was the same as my own; they too were struggling to extract themselves from a painful past, to wipe the slate clean so they will be able to begin new things. That was how they arrived at the most radical solution of them all: murder, the painful horror of murder. But was murder a solution?" (Littell 526) He has these thoughts while chopping wood with the axe that he uses to kill Moreau. Before he went to Antibes while having sex with a young man in front of a mirror he imagines his sister's

face filling his face, and suddenly: “My thinking – carried away, panic-stricken- had turned into a sly old assassin; a new Macbeth, [...] Finally a thought allowed itself to be grasped: I contemplated it with disgust, [...], I had to grant it it’s due. [...]” (515) In my opinion this is the point in Aue’s life where he decides to kill his mother. He leaves Berlin to travel to Antibes the next day. The word “kopflos” is used to describe Aue’s thinking in the German translation showing he is not thinking rationally but his repressed persona, his emotional and infantile side have taken over.

Littell also constructs the narrator’s increasing mania, his increasing dissociation and obsession with regards to Aue’s twin sister. The narrator portrays the incest as something seemingly innocent and normal but the reader knows incest is not pure or innocent, and Aue’s sexual memories and fantasies are extremely violent. A con-sanguineous relationship with his sister seems still a possibility to the grown up Aue.

While he is in Stalingrad his jealousy, hatred and hurt come flooding back to him. His private life comes to the forefront more and more. After he is shot through the head in Stalingrad his perspective seems to change. (443) The notion of the pineal gland is central to the philosophy of Bataille. Bataille, one of Littell’s favourite writers, uses the concept of the pineal eye as a reference to a blind spot in Western rationality, and an organ of excess and delirium. (in Surya) Perhaps this is the first instance where Aue knows that he will be damned forever: “I have awakened, and nothing will ever be the same again.” (Littell 436) Aue’s thinking about the regime and its work has changed, it is much more radicalised than it was before he was injured in Stalingrad. He is not sure anymore if he doesn’t want to become like some of the “young wolves” of the SD. (472) The reader knows he is already like them. He is capable of analysing the situation yet he remains in the system he deems

flawed. His physical symptoms of coughing, retching, vomiting and loose stools are gone. Essentially he is trapped in the memories of his childhood, still yearning for Una and to be like Una. Aue is aware of his psychological state of mind. His unreliability starts with his injury in Stalingrad, and sets in motion a different discourse. From here on in he has no more moral reflections in terms of the genocide and Germany's victims. Though he is better able to see through the Nazi ideology, his personal life comes to the forefront more and more. He travels to France where he kills his mother and stepfather. Then he is recruited into the Federal Ministry of the Interior assigned to Reichsführer SS' personal staff. He is given a managerial role for German concentration camps with the order to improve the living conditions of the prisoners so the output can be increased. This seems a job Aue really likes, something that satisfies the organised and efficient Aue and his ego. He is soon immersed in the tasks at hand, and witnesses the wrangling of those interested in the prisoners in terms of war production and those interested only in the extermination of the prisoners. Aue meets top Nazi bureaucrats such as Eichmann, Speer, Höss and Brandt, his job effectively making him a "Geheimnisträger", a bearer of secrets. (545) In this part of the novel, Littell impressively describes the compartmentalisation of the extermination machinery. Aue becomes more and more indifferent to his surroundings, he is stubbornly focused on fulfilling his role even though he knows that it is hopeless. He starts having nightmares and psychosomatic symptoms again which he suppresses again: "But I hadn't come to Auschwitz to philosophize." (622) He visits Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen. He meets Himmler to discuss that corruption, persistent bureaucratic incoherence and the mentality of the superior officers as three obstacles that affect the work of the camps and the "Arbeitseinsatz". (538) A committee is to be set up to work towards the main objective of increases in production, spear headed by Aue. Aue is "floating in his boots", finally had been "given responsibility", they had finally "recognised his true worth". He feels his job is "positive", a "way to

contribute to the war effort and to the victory of Germany by other means than murder and destruction". (637) Here we see his pride and narcissist tendencies, giving into "glorious, ridiculous fantasies, like a teenager." His personal desensitisation has reached new extremes and he doesn't reflect morally on what he sees anymore. He accepts the rupture of civilisation. He sees humanity but feels the final solution is imperative: "But I am sorry, there is no such thing as inhumanity. There is only humanity and more humanity: [...]" (589) Necessity, as the Greeks already knew, is not only a blind goddess, but a cruel one too." (589) Aue reflects that in wartime law is suspended and there is no sin in killing one's enemy. He believes that many Nazis were decent people even though they killed people. They did it for it was the Fuehrer's wish and his wish was the law. One of the examples Aue presents is Döll, a Nazi originally from T4. (588) Döll joined the police and the Nazis to put food on the table for his children. When he was transferred to Operation Gnadenstand he stayed as it "was the only way to be sure I could put food on the table every day." (589) So he stayed. Though Döll is portrayed as seemingly decent and quiet ordinary, he also has another side that he shows when Aue ask him about his work in Sobibor: "Little men and little women, it's all the same. It's like stepping on a cockroach." (589) Döll is used by Aue to explain how concatenation of chance turned ordinary men into genocidal facilitators.

War and the Final Solution were not about hatred according to Aue but about social problems of the time. Littell constructed Aue in this position as it allows Aue to be appalled and outraged at the prisoners' treatment on one hand and on the other never forsake his allegiance to the Nazis. This construction also has to be viewed with Littell's belief that the extermination of the Jews was a universal and human problem, not a German problem, and that genocide is a process.

When he meets Una, they can't seem to bridge the gap between them. Una feels Aue needs to move on or stay a prisoner of the past forever. (484) Una realises that "[...]: now I am a woman, and you're still a little boy." Una has studied under Jung and is familiar with Freud and incest. She rejects the incestuous relationship. Una has reached true humanity while her brother has not.

In the chapter "Air" his true conflict comes to light, and certainly his obsessive and manic personality. He has imaginary dialogues with his sister and her husband who are constructed as opposite poles to Aue, continuously countering his Nazi arguments. Aue drinks constantly, has nightmares and he also finds letters that Una had written to him which completely destroyed the perfect image Aue had of his father. (881) Una's husband served next to Aue's father, and he has the facts about what kind of man Aue's father was from these first hand encounters. The chapter shows the reader that Aue so far portrayed his family as somewhat dysfunctional and himself being a victim of his past. It is here we understand completely that Aue was an outsider in his family as he never moved on, whereas the other family members seemed to have moved forward after the father had disappeared. Aue is stuck in his infantile hatred and blames everybody around him. They had been estranged not because Aue chose to stay away but because his mother and sister had maintained their distance to him. Aue completely loses his reality. Identification with him – if it was ever to be considered – is definitely no option anymore. He is – even by Nazi standards – no ordinary or average man. While his brutality and murderousness set him forever apart from ordinary men, this chapter shows his dissociation, his neurotic and unbalanced psychotic state of mind. The climax of his mental confusion can only add to the reader's uneasiness. This

feeling of uneasiness is maintained until Aue becomes murderer of his best friend at the end of the novel and flees to France.

Aue knows that the furies will forever hound him, there is no catharsis for him, and the memories still haunt him as he says at the beginning of the text. (12-13)

In terms of genre, given the principal settings and events introduced in the second chapter and followed through to the end of the text “The Kindly Ones” could also be termed a political novel as it portrays in astounding details some of the facts and figures of what Hobsbawm called the “age of extremes” (in Hobsbawm), and the decades of examinations of WWII, the Holocaust and its perpetrators. Littell skilfully juxtaposed fiction and reality in his text, and his text offers a wide cross-section and profiles of decades of theoretical explorations of perpetrators. The political content of the text is also important in terms of the comparison between Nazism and Bolshevism. Littell shows the structural parallels between the two systems and their processes, one concerned with race, the other with class but in the end both take on the same rampant and self-destructive character.

5 Understanding the perpetrator – an investigation of the extreme figure of Dr. Maximilian Aue compared with the perpetrators in German Väterliteratur

Aue is Nazi through and through. His Nazi side is constructed to introduce to the reader the narrator’s evil Nazi side as well as the collective evil of Nazi perpetrators while the other side

of Aue is constructed in terms of a tragic as well as Freudian figure full of infantile rage and revenge. Aue was created as a special type of Nazi; one who loves classical music, reads Blanchot and Plato, Flaubert and Stendhal; a cultivated intellectual, sentient and – at least initially – one the reader might have empathy with. He is branded by his past, preoccupied with homosexual and transgressive escapism, and obsessed with femininity. Also, he is a killer and a matricide. Literary critic Michiko Kakutari dismisses Aue as a “psychopathic Nazi” (in Kakutari) while Scottish journalist and writer Neal Ascherson terms him “monster....a dreary monster, monstrous, one dimensional, even boring”. (Ascherson 11-13) He felt Aue to be quite similar to Klaus Barbie: a mixture of “self-interest, cheap emotion and organised brutality, and someone given to a-morality, self-pity and tin-pot fatalism”. I cannot agree with Ascherson with regard to Aue being one dimensional. As discussed earlier, Aue exists in two dimensions; the genocidal Nazi dimension and in the family dimension as a disturbed and pathological individual. Therefore I call him “Doppelmonster”.

Littell humanised this perpetrator in order to crawl into his psyche to attempt to extract possible perpetrator motives and motivations. A close approach to perpetrators is nothing new when we look at historians such as Arendt or Browning, and can also be found in the attempts of the authors of German Väterliteratur who went on a search for the possible motivations and motives of their family members’. Littell’s fiction has taken us a step further as it put the reader into a position where, at least initially there is room for a certain appeal of the perpetrator to the reader and even the possibility to find understanding or empathy for his perpetrator. However, readers have quickly realised that they are not like Aue at all, and that he is in fact a hard-core, convinced Nazi who even by Nazi standards stands out. His philosophy seems undemanding – genocide is part of war, he was only doing his duty, in the war machinery every single cog was equally guilty due to the compartmentalisation of

functions and the entanglement of the collective. Though Aue has hybrid qualities, his complex psychological persona is far from common, and though he has limited ability for moral reflection and human thought, those qualities did not give him immunity from Nazi fanaticism and transgressive escapism. Though Aue is kind of an outsider in the Nazi system, he remains inside the Nazi mind-set even years after its downfall, and is utterly bitter, sinister and unrepentant. No higher education and seemingly noble character stopped Aue from joining the Nazis who brought on the collapse of civilisation. In fact, he does not even feel remorse. That in itself will raise a red flag in the readers' minds as to awarding this man a place among them. Suleiman comments: "The extended representation of a character's subjectivity – not only actions but feelings, perceptions, opinions, and way of being in the world – necessarily requires a degree of empathy, on the part of both author and reader... But empathy for a perpetrator of genocide – even if it coexists with revulsion and moral condemnation – puts both author and reader on uncomfortable ethical ground." (Suleiman 1-19)

Littell adopted highly immersive techniques with continual access to the perpetrator psyche as well as allowing the reader complete participation in Aue's life, especially his inner emotional life, increasing in intensity especially towards the end of the novel. The chapter "Air" - with Aue's long hallucinatory scenes and sexual fantasies, long stretches of reflections on his emotional state – draws the reader deep into Aue's psyche, and the passages carry with them a certain risk of responsiveness and perhaps even the risk of contamination of the reader due to the total immersion into the perpetrator's psyche. Aue's manner of looking and witnessing has been utterly sexualised from the beginning. The "Air" chapter – where there is no mention of the war and German atrocities at all – is seen by Littell himself as the heart of the novel. (Millet/Littell 24) There is no possibility for the reader to distance

himself from the perpetrator in this chapter. Razinsky sees here in Aue the complete embodiment of “witnessing” in which knowledge and witnessing are inseparable from bodily experience. (Razinsky) However, one would imagine that the Air chapter produces a distinct repulsion in the reader which should extinguish any empathy or understanding that might remain.

Though Littell did not provide many distancing techniques from this perpetrator, which is emphasised by the first person narrative, he constructed opposites to him in characters such as Una and her husband, in Helene and Aue’s friend Voss. LaCapra asked if there were “spaces where some perspective other than the narrator’s may emerge and invite or allow for questions to be posed to the perpetrator’s more or less complex orientation?” (LaCapra 75) For LaCapra this would mean a provision “[...] that signals the way complicity with the first-person narrator may be resisted, disrupted, or overcome”. (76)

The massive amount of historical details could be seen as almost overwhelming and the psychological portrayal of Aue could be seen as over-the-top, especially with regards to his sexuality. Do all these details lead the reader closer to or away from such a perpetrator figure? If Littell wanted to examine the motives and motivations of perpetrators, did the construction of the psychological strand, and also the depiction of the large amount of historical details not in fact obscure the figure of Max Aue and leave the reader in a position where it is almost impossible to clearly define any motives and motivations of this perpetrator? Is the extreme personality Littell gave Aue, and the evil Littell describes like Hannah Arendt’s evil that “spreads like a fungus on the surface or lay waste the entire world” (“*The Jew as Pariah*” Arendt 99-122) hence simply overburden the reader in obtaining a

definite position? We could ask if the two strands in Aue's persona would exist separately, would it be less difficult for the reader to deduce a definite and unambiguous opinion about Aue. The rejection of this perpetrator seems not merely a question of his status as Nazi but also that of his status as a person. The reader is constantly torn between the two strands in Aue's persona which constitute a possibility for the reader to not only emphasise with either strand but to be complicit. The novel gains its tragic and mythical depth through the intertextuality to the Oresteia, and the construction of this other level enhances but also confuses the text. The creation of this is a new approach to examine perpetrators. It seems in the last few decades there had been a "more widespread tendency to impersonate perpetrators" such as in theatre and film according to Sidra DeKoven Ezrahi. (DeKoven Ezrahi 17-38) but Littell crawled right into Aue's mind, and the new approach can be seen in the radicalisation of the perpetrator, and Littell's exploration of the complicity between this narrator and the reader where the usual protective distance is negligible. La Capra calls this "rather a manipulative, pseudo-dialogic relation aimed at generating complicity and even subordination rather than critical exchange ([...])". (LaCapra 71-97)

Aue's appealing qualities are his moral scruples and principles, and his ability to at least rhetorically portray himself as a civilised and somewhat critical person; however they are also the most dangerous of his qualities as they entice the readers to render Aue a place among them, or at least grant him the status of being better than the other Nazis in the novel. Though the gap exists, in the end he is one and the same person. When we recall the chapter on the reception of the novel, it seems that in the humanisation of the perpetrator many critics saw Littell's biggest offence. But perhaps Littell created Aue's double sidedness to "intensify the sense of abyssal excess in the Nazi genocide, although one may question the way the "perverse" eroticism and the atrocities are articulated in the novel". (80-81) Winfried

G. Sebald, a German writer, stated “I think [Walter} Benjamin at one point says that there is no point in exaggerating that which is already horrific” (Schwartz 88), and this has certainly been a criticism aimed at Littell.

Another interesting aspect of this narrator is the image he has of himself. From the beginning onwards he likens himself to a camera. He is obsessed with looking at things, witnessing and reporting, even sight-seeing. While facing executions he wants to look away as well as look. Liran Razinsky has termed Aue’s function in the text as “an eye. He sees.” (“History, Excess and Testimony” Razinsky 69-87) Littell constructed him to be like an x-ray scanner, looking at others, looking at himself, looking at himself looking at others. He seems to be mostly at a distance to the other perpetrators and the events he witnesses. This gives him a certain outsider status from the start. And though he seems to have the ability of seeing clearly what is going on around him, he did not take the options of leaving the SS or even transferring. Instead he seems to get deeper and deeper into the machinery of destruction while his moral involvement lessens and his indifference increases rapidly, in the end becoming totally immune as far as reflective conscience is concerned. This is perhaps a good point for the reader to ask himself if Aue had not been already morally compromised before he entered the SD. We know he had been accepted into the SS already in 1934. He remembers: “Ever since I was a child, I had been haunted by a passion for the absolute, for the overcoming of all limits; and now this passion had lead me to the edge of the mass graves of the Ukraine. I had always wanted my thinking to be radical; and now the State, the nation had also chosen the radical and the absolute; how, then just at that moment, could I turn my back, say no, and at the end of the day prefer the comfort of the bourgeois laws, the mediocre assurance of the social contract? [...] And if this radicalism was the radicalism of the abyss, and if the absolute turned out to be absolute evil, one still had to follow them to the end, with eyes wide

open – of that at least I was utterly convinced.” (Littell 96) This is a convinced Nazi speaking, someone who was seeking the extreme from early on as we know from his games of self-strangulation and other practices such as stealing from neighbours, or having an incestuous relationship with his twin sister. Aue is skilful in getting what he needs, especially as he is a very able rhetorician that confidently and in a conniving manner manipulates people. While resting in a sanatorium in Yalta he connects the homosexual inclination of National Socialism with anticlericalism and is able to seduce a young officer into a homosexual relationship. The image Aue has of his father is also an important indicator for his convictions about the regime he serves. Aue idealises Hitler – as demagogue but also as a substitute for the father he has lost. He likens the Führer to his father, and even remarks his father could have been Hitler’s right-hand man or even “[...] , if such had been his fate, who knows, have been there in his place” when he hears Hitler’s speech at the Braukeller in 1930 in Munich. (465-466)

Time and time again Aue sees the regime’s shortcomings, hypocrisy and flawed ideology. A good example is when he is asked to ascertain if a tribe of Mountain Jews from Naltschik are in fact Jewish. The tribe claims to be just like other mountain tribes, do not speak Hebrew or Jiddish but Kabard and Balkar Turkish along with their own language. The Wehrmacht was trying to establish positive relationships with the anti-Bolshevist minorities of this region, and Aue is asked by the SS, who would rather murder the Jews, to investigate. Even though the origin of the mountain Jews cannot be accurately traced, the SS ask their own expert who swiftly racially determines the tribe to be of Jewish origin. Aue is adamant the report produced by the SS expert was based on nothing much else than prejudice and justifications to serve the Nazi ideology. He criticises this report as it left out all the citations that contradicted the SS, and ignored all Aue’s findings. In the end Aue realises that the matter of

the origin of the Bergjuden is not about really finding out their origin but about the wrangling between Wehrmacht and SS. (322) A few days after Aue is punished with a transfer to Stalingrad at the suggestion of his superior. He is told that he does not understand what is expected of him by the regime. There are many examples where the reader is shown Aue's conviction of the regime he is serving. When Aue is interviewing a Russian politruk the Germans had taken prisoner in Stalingrad, and they discuss their various ideologies, it is impressive to see Aue's capable mind analysing the two similar systems.

We might ask ourselves why Littell constructed a modern Orestes with a perverted sexuality and pathological personality that was at the same time configured by militarism and misogyny á la Theweleit. (*"Männerphantasien"* Theweleit) While certain aspects of Aue come across as a representative figure or plausible embodiment of Nazism, he is not even by Nazi standard normal or average because of his homosexuality, his intellect, his dual nationality which Littell gave him so that he could not become a "Durchschnittsnazi".

(Marginalien 35) Aue's sexuality and perversity and his sadomasochism are stock traits intended to signify evil in terms of literary or other representations of Nazis, much removed from the banal Eichmann or the compliant Döll. Littell revealed that Max Aue is not really like a real person: "Er ist weniger eine Person als eine Stimme, ein Ton, ein Blick. Zwischen dem, was Max beschreibt – er sieht alle anderen mit aeusserst klarem Blick -, und ihm besteht eine Distanz, eine Kluft, als ob er gewissermassen nicht der Erzähler wäre." (3031) To explain Aue, Littell said: "Es gibt in dem Buch Widersprüche, [...], Dinge, die nicht zusammenstimmen, weisse Flecken. Zwischen dem Erzähler als konstruierter Person, dem >>er<< des >>ich<<, und allem, was er sieht und beschreibt, besteht ein gap. Was er sieht, was er beschreibt und die Tatsache, dass er >>er<< ist und nicht zum Beispiel Eichmann – das führt zu einem Blick, der zwar nicht kritisch, doch distanziert ist." (31-32) Littell said

that this is what makes Aue different to an Eichmann or a Himmler as they are not capable of looking at themselves or others like Aue does, nor are they capable of discourse and discussion". Littell also stated when asked how he prepared to get into Aue's head that: "I drew on my own way of seeing things, I based him mostly on myself, not anybody else" (Trachtenberg) - a statement open to at least ambiguous interpretation.

Pierre Nora said in his interview with Littell that it constituted a radical break to have Aue see more than historians ever could have. Nora described Littell's novel as relaying history as "[...], experienced events". (46-47) While this might be true, Aue's testimony seems problematic as his experiences are highly personal and subjective and not always honest. He does not have a flawed memory in terms of the experienced history but does with regards to his family story, the incestuous relationship he had with his twin sister, the memory lapse when it comes to his mother's murder, his misconception about his father to name but a few. He constantly re-iterates that he is truthful or that he does not add anything to what happened, but himself questions his recall. All these issues arise from the repressed side of his personality. Robert Buch finds that Aue's disintegration is "nothing other than the furies of the novel's title, haunting, or in the narrator's own words, hounding him – [...]" (Buch) Difficulty arises for the reader and critics and historians as Littell transgresses the taboo of what Erin McGlothlin called the "imagination of the consciousness of the perpetrator outside acceptable discourse." ("Theorizing the Perpetrator" McGlothlin 210-230) Within historical or ethical enquiries into perpetrators the representation of these perpetrators produces certain anxieties especially with regards to seeing them as human. Browning feels that "not trying to understand the perpetrators in human terms would make impossible [...] any history of Holocaust perpetrators that sought to go beyond one-dimensional caricature." (in Browning) There seems a reluctance to engage with perpetrators in terms of morality and humanity, and

difficulties of incorporating them into a shared human sphere. With the realisation that perpetrators are human beings comes an anxiety that we might be like them.

Littell himself said that he constructed Aue the way he did so that the other types of perpetrators would look clearer in contrast. Daniel Mendelsohn stated in his review of “The Kindly Ones”: “[...] I think that Littell might say that precisely because we are by now inured to representations of Nazi evil in literature and especially in film, he needs to break new taboos in order to make us think about evil, about a life lived in evil and a mind unsentimentally willing, even eager, to accept the ramifications of that choice.” (in Mendelsohn) Mendelsohn brings to the point his clear understanding of Aue as a Holocaust perpetrator who remained in the events with “eyes wide open” – despite of what he saw. We cannot make the case that Aue is like the other Nazis. In contrast, Aue’s good friend, Thomas Hauser, who saved Aue from prosecution by the Nazis for his homosexuality and recruited him to the SD, seems a perfect example of a leading Nazi perpetrator. He is convinced of Nazi ideology and is always one step ahead of Aue. He knows how to play the games to his advantage. He is an opportunist, completely egotistical, amoral and has no scruples. His discourse is a straight expression of Nazi fanaticism. Though Aue is more critical of the regime, he succumbs time and time again to murderous impulses such as when he kills his former lover Mihai. (Littell 949), an old man playing the wrong music, (932) and the revenge killing of his mother and stepfather. In the end he kills his best friend – seemingly to gain his papers. The murder of his friend Thomas is a puzzling issue: does he only kill Thomas to get his papers and uniform so he can flee to France? Or does killing Thomas bring to an end the friendship as well as his complicity with the Nazi regime? By killing Thomas, Aue is able to cut the cords that tie him to Germany and he can go to France to start a new life and erase his SS officer identity. The question cannot be answered for

certain. Immediately after killing his friend, Aue states: “The kindly ones were onto me.”
(975)

6 Conclusion – Comparison of the Holocaust perpetrator in Väterliteratur and “The Kindly Ones”

The comparison of the perpetrators in the four texts of Väterliteratur and in Littell’s “The Kindly Ones” will arguably show us that Littell comes close to answering some of the questions regarding perpetrator motives and motivations that can be compared with findings by historians and other experts over the last few decades. It is my opinion that therefore Littell should be considered as a critical and serious historian. Littell’s claims about the Holocaust and the Holocaust perpetrators can be compared to Welzer’s analysis of perpetrator figures and nations especially when we think about how both notion that “der deutsche Rassismus einem Prozess sehr viel näher kommt, dass aber der Antisemitismus ein Inhalt ist, historisch konstruiert. [...], dass der Jude zur bevorzugten Gestalt des deutschen Rassenwahns wurde. Der Prozess ist der Rassenwahn, der Rassismus, der Hass gegen den Anderen und, de facto, die Selbstdefinition in Bezug auf den anderen.” (Marginalien 49) Welzer sees this in a similar way.

Let us look at the portrayals of perpetrators in the texts discussed in my thesis. The perpetrators we find in the four texts of Väterliteratur come from a variety of backgrounds – from pre-war Nazis who were conditioned to the hatred of others to career Nazis and sadists. All but one came from core Nazi backgrounds who shared the ideology of the regime. They

cannot be classed pre-war extremists nor can it be proven they succumbed to peer pressure or pressure of hierarchy such as some of the men Browning examined in the Reserve Police Battalion 101. (in Browning) To remind us: Mengele, or Schneider's narrator who was modelled on Josef Mengele, was an SS officer (SS Hauptsturmführer), and a sadistic physician at Auschwitz. Hans Frank was a Nazi lawyer who became Generalgouverneur in Poland. His rank was Lieutenant General. He was also known as "The butcher of Poland". Gerhard Bast was also "a man of the law", and head of the Gestapo in Muenster and Linz. He was a Major (Sturmbannführer) in the SS. Crisolti was a highly decorated Wehrmacht Generalleutnant (posthumously promoted – Major General). He served in WWI and WWII. Aue, the fictional narrator in "The Kindly Ones" is an officer of the SD, informant and intelligence officer for the Nazis with the rank is Obersturmbannführer (Lieutenant Colonel). The examination of the perpetrators in this thesis shows a wide spectrum of Holocaust perpetrators.

Schneider's, Frank's and Pollack's perpetrators can be seen as ideological fanatics complicit in the regime's crimes. They were educated and capable intellectuals that had an understanding of what was going on. They were not bureaucrats nor automatons. They were high-ranking Nazis who dutifully served the nation even if it meant to be genocidal murderers. Neither Hans Frank nor Schneider's perpetrator expressed any sympathy or empathy for their victims, and they were simply interested in their own lives and egos and their own gain, and used their positions to further their careers. They can only be described as totally a-moral. Mengele and Frank are historically well known and we know they had an extremist nature. Schneider's perpetrator maintained his political beliefs grounded in a darwinistic and racist ideology and showed no remorse. He has to be classed as somewhat psychopathic with his experiments, a true ideologue who understood his life to be in the

service of a much larger vision. Frank can be seen as a perpetrator that had been radicalised into genocide. He was an opportunist and careerist, continuously seething with self-pity. He fits the category of top Nazi ideological desk murderer that was responsible for the demise of millions of human beings that made use of a well-rewarded career where material motives and his status in the Nazi hierarchy were most important. Frank never showed any true remorse. He was a rabid anti-Semite, and a true narcissist and ideologue such as Mengele. He certainly saw himself a “Herrenmensch”. He portrayed himself as a mere agent of authority but was clearly in full control as Generalgouverneur of Poland. In Hans Frank we see a perpetrator who seemed to have had no conscience though tried to convince his prosecutors that he did. Frank knew what was asked of him and continuously tried to excel. While Frank must be seen as a true anti-Semite, we cannot say this for Aue. He does see some of the German victims clearly, and especially when we look at the two female victims he describes dying we understand Aue clearly sees the “Other”. Aue describes the German victims at the beginning as “victims” whereas towards the end of the novel he labels them “insects” and “lice” and “subjects”. His intellectuality and savviness seem to serve him well when it comes to his career as Nazi but issues of obsession and repression let him down as a human being, much like Hans Frank. The mythisation and humanisation of the perpetrator has been seen as a transgression by Littell as it lets the reader see straight into the soul and psyche of a Nazi criminal and murderer but it serves Littell’s quest to find out what their motives might have been. For the comparison of the perpetrators we cannot simply look at the careers of these perpetrators but what traits catapulted them into the careers and up the Nazi ladder: respective history and backgrounds, the ability to reason and reflect, also the ability to see “The Other” while still remaining part of the killing mechanisms and machine. In Bast we find a perpetrator who came from a family background that was intensely anti-social and anti-Semite. He self-selected to join the SS and as such possessed pre-disposing

patterns that made him perfect for the role he chose. He was already a member of the party when it was still illegal. We can assume that he was prejudiced from childhood and indoctrinated by hatred of the “Other”. He also came from an area in which anti-Semitism and racial hatred was normal and fostered by his parents. These perpetrators were accepted into their professions because of their devotion to Nazi ideas and ideals of German Folkish views, racial purity and superiority.

In Crisolli we find a perpetrator that was accustomed to war and serving his country. Judging from the evidence that could be found he seemed obedient and wanted to fulfil his duty in leading the troops for his country. He respected authority. Nothing mattered more to him than German military grandeur and glory. He certainly was complicit in the removal of partisans and other enemies, and had blood on his hands from the execution his grandson described. There is not much said about Crisolli regarding extremist or anti-Semitic attitude but what is certain is that he was no high-ranking Nazi. Crisolli joined the German military to pursue a career helpful for ascending German society. He stayed true to the military from an early republican army with traditional military values right to National Socialism’s army which had not much to do with heroic visions or knights in shining armours.

All of the perpetrators in the texts of the Väterliteratur had respect for authority and hierarchy and needed a strong inclination to obedience. The perpetrators came from Nazi backgrounds with regards to the conditioning of many of their prejudices, especially in how they saw the enemies of Germany and Austria. As part of the SS Frank, Schneider’s perpetrator who was

modelled on Mengele, and Bast were part of an essentially criminal organisation. They were asked for complete subordination, shared common values, and had undergone extensive training to become able criminals who were politically indoctrinated. They were part of a system that allowed and encouraged their actions. The devaluation and demonization of the “Other” was natural to them and ingrained in their personalities. Due to their ranks they were in an agentic mode where it was easy to relinquish individual responsibility and act as agents of an authoritarian regime. The compartmentalisation of functions and their bureaucratisation provided a perfect environment and, if necessary, screen to hide behind.

At this stage I will ask if the son/grandson perspective of the Väterliteratur texts discussed here permit a clear comprehension of the crimes of the grandfather or fathers. Obviously proven historical facts and figures cannot be denied or easily manipulated by the sons and grandsons of these perpetrators. However, even though there can only be limited uncertainty in terms of the relatives’ involvement or culpability for the described perpetrators, we find that all but Frank make attempts to draw a wider circle in which the fathers/grandfathers might also be seen as human beings. Littell does this also by humanising Aue.

When comparing the perpetrators we find that in addition to rank and deeds, we can also compare the educational status of the perpetrators – they were learned men, educated with most of them having university degrees and doctorates. We assume they were capable of reflection. Their pre-dispositions have been similar as they joined NSDAP and applied for positions with SD or SS, coming from Nazi family backgrounds.

Littell's perpetrator is an extreme ideologist such as Mengele and Frank. He loves the absolute, the radical. Though he cannot be seen as a careerist, he seeks jobs that give him a sense of purpose. On the surface he seems bureaucrat; he calls himself a "Schreibtischhengst". He portrays himself as one but we know he is much more than that. Much of what is said about the perpetrators of the Väterliteratur can be said about Aue as well. Aue is not embodied in any real Nazi but he is integrated in the genocidal and historical processes that Littell depicted. He was constructed to contrast the other Nazis in the novel, especially in his role as "Doppelmonster". He rationally accepts the rupture of civilisation by the Nazi regime. He cold-bloodedly kills – not Jews or homosexuals but his mother and his best friend. He exhibits worldviews coloured by fatalism which was an excuse for many perpetrators. Aue seems to have moral scruples and has the intellectual ability to see the Nazi regime for what it really was but it does not lead to his moral awakening. The opposite is the case, he becomes more and more hardened and refuses to accept his realisations in terms of making different choices, and his Nazi persona strengthens while his repressed persona falls apart. Aue seems to go through a process of radicalisation and escalation at the same time as the Holocaust progressed towards the "Final solution".

When comparing Aue to the perpetrators of Väterliteratur, he doesn't seem to be as unscrupulous and careless as Hans Frank but he shares traits such as vanity and narcissism with the Väterliteratur perpetrators. Aue is a dangerous perpetrator, a sinister perpetrator. Aue also has to be seen as a condensed version of what we understand to be Nazi. His ideology is expressed well in the conversation he has with a Russian politruk in Stalingrad. (Littell 39-400)

In Littell's "The Kindly Ones" the process of genocide is explained in terms of the contexts in which it occurred. The Nazis Aue meets show the compartmentalisation and bureaucratisation of functions, the denial of reality by those Nazis who had learned to distance themselves from violence and victims. They are portrayed as having deep hatred of Germany's enemies, much of what is shown in their euphemistic language, and strong convictions in the Nazi ideology. They follow the rules and adhere to the operating procedures which constantly improved the killing process. Littell describes many different perpetrators who came from different backgrounds with different mind-sets and self-images, some true ideologues and some who simply joined for their very own reasons such as career choice or to put food on the table for their kids such as Döll. (588) Their behaviours were regulated according to many different individual and specific frames of reference which lead to different actions. The differentiation of the contexts in which these perpetrators operated show us a base to find patterns of perpetrator behaviour and from which perpetrator motivations and motives could be deduced. Situational factors are highlighted as much as the social and normative backgrounds of the perpetrators. Many of them became very adapted to their functions in which they acted as part of a system that allowed and encouraged their actions. Littell shows that there is not one homogeneous perpetrator type.

The hesitation to portray the Holocaust from a perpetrator's view is understandable. The apprehension to crawl into the mind of a perpetrator should not cause a rejection of efforts to examine the motivations and motives of perpetrators, nor a denial to do so. Ruth Franklin claims in her new book that Holocaust literature cannot be significant if we treat it as inviolable or beyond approach or judgement. She feels sacralisation of Holocaust works is a disservice, smothering the critical dialogue that great literature engenders. (*"A thousand*

darknesses” Franklin) Littell’s novel has to be seen as a substantial contribution to literature as it probes the limits of fictional representation of Holocaust perpetrators.

Semprum saw the undertaking of literary fiction in saving the memory of Auschwitz. Did Littell contribute to saving the memory of Auschwitz with the creation of “The Kindly Ones”? He portrays the historical facts immaculately and accurately. The perpetrator we find in Aue is a brilliant construct to show a new stage of post-memory discourse as it brings history to life again.

Littell hoped to touch readers morally with his prose. However, many were repulsed by his novel and narrator. We have established that Väterliteratur serves as a vehicle not only for literary responses to social turmoil such as the student revolution in Germany in the 1960s or as social criticism but an intimate search for one’s own identity. Väterliteratur of the 70s and 80s became an expression of tensions that erupted between the war and post-war generations in Germany, especially as authors born during or after WWII confronted their fathers and relatives about their political choices during the Nazi reign. It seems after years of accusations, indignation or sometimes even denouncements, Väterliteratur is still concerned with banishing the ghosts of the past. Authors of Väterliteratur cannot change the past but may attempt to understand it. To understand and to examine the cognizance of a perpetrator’s past, we need to know their individual stories. There seems a wish for conciliation for some authors– not with the German past as a whole but the individual past of the relatives connected with Nazi evil. These authors write against the blurred images that their families often provided in order to illuminate the past against the trend of these family memories. Perhaps it is easier to find answers about perpetrators – be they ordinary men or

willing executioners – through the examination of real people in contrast to fictional people. We find these perpetrators in material remnants such as letters, official documents, photos, even personal belongings. Perhaps this is the only way for these “new historians” to find a way to not only the historical truth about their relatives but also the truth about themselves. Whatever facts these authors discover about their relatives, they have to be considered incredibly intimate and personal as we have seen by the examination of a very small sample of German speaking Väterliteratur which provides evidence of a variety of techniques and consequences such as reflection and projection, self-analysis and self-criticism to more negative or challenging ways of dealing with family historiography such as stereotyping, sentimentality and romanticism, shame, sorrow and even hatred.

In Väterliteratur we find a perspective of narrative that is authentic in the emotional entanglement of the authors/narrators with the relatives’ pasts. The merits of Väterliteratur have to be seen in the perspective of these narratives and the depth of the authors’ entanglements. There are many debates whether Littell has produced an authentic confrontation with the perpetrator he has created. Was it necessary to create a monster such as Aue? Should we pat Littell on the back or condemn him for his daring, his transgressiveness? Or had the authors of Väterliteratur not already provided an intensive and authentic psychological portrait of real Holocaust perpetrators?

In addition, can fictional perpetrator literature such as “The Kindly Ones” add anything to history, and if so, can it be considered adequate or even equal to the accounts of Väterliteratur? Can a fictional voice of evil in an embodied form be a tool we can learn from, a voice that speaks to us about perpetrator motives and motivations? Can the change of the

viewpoint from the sons of perpetrators to perpetrators – those perpetrators who bear witness to their own atrocities – provide us with answers? Especially if they are not laconic and dull tales by self-serving and self-justifying Nazis such as perhaps the memoirs of Speer or Höss but provocative and excessive? Aue is different in that he is not dull. He discloses all. He discloses all of his flaws, his faults, hides nothing and shows just how different he is to the average Nazi and average reader.

Littell has been criticised for the relativisation and the humanisation of his perpetrator. As stated before, the authors of *Väterliteratur* do not have the luxury of fiction as they are entangled in authentic narratives. Authors of *Väterliteratur* are aware that due to the familial relationships with the perpetrators, there is always the danger they could be accused of trying to understand or to reconcile, and even lose sight of critical debate. On the other hand the authors of *Väterliteratur* realise how powerful this kind of literature is as they have to come up with the courage to lay bare their inner emotions and to expose themselves to public scrutiny. Littell again had the luxury to write about a fictional perpetrator. He did not have to come up with the courage Niklas Frank had to muster to tell the world his father had been “the butcher of Poland”. Littell provided a provocation with “The Kindly Ones”, whereas Niklas Frank disclosed a shocking truth about his family and himself.

Littell’s incredible imagination fascinated me about his novel. “The Kindly Ones” deserves praise not only as a vastly researched historical novel but an account of highly interesting and convincing characters, and a highly interesting narrator that is neither ordinary man nor average Nazi. The switching between historical narrative and images of pornographic and incestuous erotic fantasies as well as the discarding of once popular psychosexual

explanations of Nazism and other theories make this an intriguing work of literature. There are no new theories of evil and even the notion that we are all capable of evil won't stand up – not even in light of Aue's excessive eccentricity and evil. In my opinion, the novel provides no irrevocable answer as to the motives and motivations of perpetrators nor does Littell find a "smoking gun".

We must also ask if the richness of historical details, the myriads of mundane information, the overlaying of the Oresteia, and the excessive psychological portrait of the perpetrators did not in fact distract the reader from looking at what motivates human beings to become evil perpetrators. If Littell's literature is to offer a stretching and an expansion of history and memory, did Littell leave room for the reader to explore more than what was witnessed by Aue? Or was the creation of Aue as a Doppelmonster surplus to the inquiry into Nazi evil? Can Aue give more insight than Frank or Mengele, Eichmann or Höss? Medicus and Pollack provided grey zones when they were unable to provide evidence about their father or grandfather. The reader can fill these gaps or leave them be whereas in Littell's prose is no space for the reader's own imagination.

Compared to "The Kindly Ones", the most important aspect of Väterliteratur for me was the fact that it provided an authentic yet subjective account of the perpetrators of the Holocaust by individual perpetrators as seen through the eyes of their children/grandchildren. Though the authors/narrators are innocent, they live with the guilt of the fathers as descendants of evil. The relationship to the perpetrators of the discussed Väterliteratur is problematic as there is no other outcome than what history provided. Väterliteratur has provided a more honest debate about Nazi perpetrators that has been just as intense in the psychological

portrayal of the perpetrators – and the knowledge we have of the effects that had on their children and grandchildren.

Littell has to be applauded for his courage to focus on the Nazi perpetrator figure in a humanised and complex form such as Aue as a new kind of narrative especially as Littell must have known he would earn not only praise for his novel but harsh criticism by many leading critics. His creation of a fictional perpetrator figure such as Dr. Aue deserves praise however, the problem with his plausibility is a valid criticism for me. I prefer the authenticity of the majority of the selected Väterliteratur. This literature has its merits in authenticity and facticity and though some Väterliteratur might use limited guesswork, it is the honest vulnerability and subjectivity of the authors of Väterliteratur that by sharing their second hand traumas made me acquire a sense of perpetrators that were real human beings, and as such much more frightening.

As shown in my thesis there is continued publication of texts regarding the perpetrators of the Holocaust, and even earlier texts such as “Vati” enjoyed a reprint ten years after it was first published. In my opinion both literature such as Väterliteratur and fictional perpetrator literature such as Littell’s “The Kindly Ones” is productive and extremely important in the memory discourse, and the comparison of both has been extremely fruitful.

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ⁱ <http://www.literaturwelt.com/epochen/brd.html>

ⁱⁱ <http://www.buecher-wiki.de/index.php/BuecherWiki/Familienroman>

ⁱⁱⁱ Information from <http://www.auschwitz.dk/mengele.htm> and <http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10007060>

^{iv} Troller, Georg Stefan, "Personenbeschreibung: Niklas Frank – Der Sohn des Mörders", (Uploaded 2009), ZDF, Season 22, Episode 1, Germany, 07 March 1993 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fRa5yWnrA3k>

^v <http://www.mdr.de/mdr-figaro/journal/niklas-frank104.html>, 17 January 2014

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^{vii} <http://www.zeit.de/2013/30/niklas-frank-biographie-bruder-norman>, Stefan Lebert, Die Zeit, 25 Juli 2013

^{viii} <http://www.zeit.de/2013/30/niklas-frank-biographie-bruder-norman>

^{ix} <http://thomaswollinger.com/schlagwort/niklas-frank>

^x www.thomasmedicus.de/zur-person, 2012, 29 May

^{xi} <http://goethe.de/ge/pok/dos/dos/ern/kig/lit/de2691180htm>

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^{xiii} <http://hudsonreview.com/2013/02/villons-epitaph-ballade-of-the-hanged-men/#.UqzWXvQW3qY>

^{xiv} <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/481652/psychological-novel>

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In Roman mythology they are called "Furies". In literature the Furies appear in the Aeschylus' "Oresteia" concerning the end of the curse on the House of Atreus, depicting in essence the shift from a system of personal vendetta to a system of litigation. It begins with Agamemnon's return home where he finds his wife Clytemnestra had married her lover, Aegisthus. Agamemnon is killed by Clytemnestra as he had sacrificed their daughter Iphigenia. When her son, Orestes, grows up, one of Apollo's oracles calls him to avenge Agamemnon. Orestes kills his mother and her lover. Though the oracle commanded Orestes to do it, the Erinyes pursued Orestes for the matricide. Orestes flees to Athens to ask Athena's aid. Athena, goddess of wisdom and courage but also civilisation and law and justice, intervened by setting up a trial to judge Orestes. With the Erinyes being the accusers and Apollo as defence, Orestes is acquitted and the Erinyes change into the Eumenides, the "gracious/kindly ones". This is where the name "Les Bienveillantes" as the novel's title comes from, referring to questions of judgement and punishment for ones' actions. The Oresteia is integral to the novel, and one could see the main parts of the novel overlaid by the Oresteia, or existing as two strands side by side. References to Greek mythology and tragedy are found everywhere in the text be it in names or other subtle references.